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ABSTRACT

The autonomous model of literacy--including its two features autonomy of text and autonomy of skill, which have been particularly influential in reading assessment--does not account for important aspects of reading. The pragmatic model of literacy accounts more adequately for how readers respond to text. An analysis of the 1976 and 1987 versions of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) shows that although the newer version does encourage a pragmatic orientation to text, most of the items still require an autonomous orientation. As a result, there is often a marked discontinuity between passage and items. Sometimes discontinuity is further reflected within the items themselves: the target response requires an autonomous orientation whereas one or more distractors have a pragmatic appeal. Such distractors provide the kind of orientation that the passage calls for, even though they do not strictly fit with the surface information that the passage provides. A better approach to reading assessment would be based on the notion of multiple literacies suggested by John Black. Tests like the TABE should include separate components to cover autonomously oriented and pragmatically oriented material. Within these components the items should be constructed so that readers can be clear about which orientation to adopt. If external instruments like the TABE are used at all, it is best to view them as a single component within an ethnographic model of assessment and instruction that is designed to nurture the various literacy skills that adults need. (The document includes a 50-item bibliography.) (CML)

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Reading Assessment: Autonomous and Pragmatic Models of Literacy

Clifford Hill and Kate Parry

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LC Report 88-2

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READING ASSESSMENT: AUTONOMOUS AND PRAGMATIC MODELS OF LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

In this report we examine current practices in reading assessment in the light of what Brian Street has described as the **autonomous model of literacy**. In reviewing this model, we delineate two features that have been particularly influential in reading assessment—autonomy of text and autonomy of skill. We point out that such a model does not account for important aspects of reading and so propose what we call the **pragmatic model of literacy**, which accounts more adequately for how readers respond to text.

We use these two models to throw light on the reading comprehension component of a widely used test in the field of adult literacy—the **Test of Adult Basic Education** (TABE). We first analyze representative units from the old (1976) version of the TABE, showing how both the passages and the items reflect the autonomous model. We then analyze a comparable range of units from the new (1987) version of the TABE, which, according to the test makers, represents a more communicative—or, in our terms, pragmatic—orientation to text. We show that, while the passages do encourage a pragmatic orientation, most of the items still require an autonomous orientation. As a result, there is often a marked discontinuity between passage and items. In certain instances, discontinuity is further reflected within the items themselves: the target response requires an autononomous orientation whereas one or more distractors has a pragmatic appeal. Such distractors provide the kind of orientation that the passage calls for, even though they do not, strictly speaking, fit with the surface information that the passage provides.

Finally, we suggest a broader approach to reading assessment based on the notion of multiple literacies put forward by John Black. We first recommend that tests like the TABE should include separate components to cover autonomously oriented and pragmatically oriented material; and that within these components the items should be constructed so that readers can be clear about which orientation to adopt. We then point out that external instruments like the TABE—if they are to be used at all—are best viewed as a single component within an ethnographic model of assessment and instruction that is designed to nurture the various literacy skills that adults need.

Introduction

In **Literacy in Theory and Practice** (1984), Brian Street introduces the phrase **autonomous model of literacy** in order to describe a set of beliefs and practices that has been dominant in the western tradition of literacy and schooling. He claims that this model is misleading and develops what he calls the **ideological model of literacy** as an alternative. In laying out the autonomous model, he analyzes the work of researchers such as Angela Hildyard and David Olson (1978), Patricia Greenfield (1972), Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1968), and Jack Goody (1977), and, in a recent article (1986), the work of Walter Ong (1982). Street is mainly concerned with literacy as a sociocultural phenomenon rather than a linguistic one and thus focuses on the larger claims made by these writers—namely, that literacy "is a neutral technology that can be detached from specific social contexts" (1984, 1), and that, as such, it has far-reaching consequences for both societies and individuals.

The consequences for societies are discussed most fully in the work of Goody and Watt, who consider as their defining case "the rise of Greek civilization" since, according to them, this "is the prime historical example of the transition to a really literate society" (1968, 42). The widespread use of writing in ancient Greece, they claim, led to both a new conception of truth, or episteme, and a new method, or epistemology, for finding out that truth. The argument is, on the one hand, that writing enabled the preservation of accounts of the past, and so encouraged the comparison, and hence criticism, of different versions; and, on the other, that as an analytic system with its own capacity for isolating words from their context, it fostered "the essentially literate" procedures of definition, analysis, and synthesis. Moreover, the relative permanence of writing meant that such critical thinking could be recorded for future examination, which, in turn, led to even greater refinement in using the procedures. The result, as can be seen in the work of Plato and Aristotle, was the development of the logic and taxonomy that became the foundation of western philosophy and science, and concomitantly, of social and technological development in the western world. As Goody and Watt themselves put it:

> The overwhelming debt of ... contemporary civilization to classical Greece must be regarded as in some measure the result, not so much of the Greek genius, as of the intrinsic differences between non-literate (or protoliterate) and literate societies—the latter being mainly represented by those societies using the Greek alphabet and its derivatives. (1968, 55)

Whereas Goody and Watt focus on how literacy has affected the development of society, Olson and Ong consider its consequences for the development of the individual. Olson suggests that observed differences between the abilities of children and adults to determine "the direct logical implications" of given statements can be ascribed to literacy:

> Children are unable to apply interpretive procedures to the sentence meaning, the meaning in the text. They can, however, use sentences as a cue to speaker's meaning if these sentences occur in an appropriate context. Literate adults are quite capable of treating sentences in either way. (1977, 273)

Ong maintains that such cognitive abilities can be developed through minimal literacy instruction. He cites the Russian psychologist, A. R. Luria (1976), who carried out research with literate and non-literate adults in Uzbekistan in the 1930s. According to Ong, Luria discovered that literate individuals were better able to carry out a range of tasks—for example, classifying objects in abstract categories, providing definitions for isolated words, and answering questions based upon syllogisms. Ong concludes that "it takes only a moderate degree of literacy to make a tremendous difference in thought processes." (1982, 50)

Street argues against this autonomous model of literacy on the grounds that it confounds literacy with western schooling and logic with western convention; and he counters it with the ideological model based on the following assumptions:

> (1) the meaning of literacy depends upon the social institutions in which it is embedded
>
> (2) literacy can only be known to us in forms which have political and ideological significance and it cannot, therefore, be helpfully separated from that significance and treated as though it were an "autonomous" thing

(3) the particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend upon such aspects of social structure as stratification and the role of educational institutions

(4) the processes whereby reading and writing are learnt are what construct the meaning of it for particular practitioners

(5) it is probably more appropriate to refer to "literacies" than to any single "literacy"

(6) writers who tend towards the ideological model of literacy recognize as problematic the relationship between the analysis of any autonomous, isolable qualities of literacy and the analysis of the ideological and political nature of literacy practice. (1984, 4)

We find ourselves in sympathy with these assumptions. As linguists particularly concerned with education, we are well aware that literacy is embedded in social institutions and that the meaning attached to its practice is not the same in different cultures. Street's own fieldwork in Iran is a case in point. He demonstrates the differences between **makhtab** literacy—that is, the literacy in Arabic script acquired in Koranic schools but adapted in recent years to serve the new commercial requirements of the communities that Street studied—and western literacy, acquired by young people in urban schools, which is largely irrelevant in the rural context. Another instance of the degree to which cultural use of literacy may vary is provided by Harold Conklin's work (1949) among the Hanunoo in the Philippines. There, a longstanding tradition of literacy has remained largely confined to rituals of courtship; the Hanunoo have developed few of the legal, religious, and commercial functions with which literacy is associated in the western world.

We could cite many other anthropological accounts of varying cultural uses of literacy (e.g., Basso and Anderson 1973, Cole and Scribner 1981, Parry 1982, Besnier 1986). Our concern here, however, is not so much with literacies which, from the western viewpoint, may be considered exotic, as with the different approaches that we have observed within western literacy itself. For while we agree with Street that the autonomous model has dominated the thinking of those responsible for the formal transmission of literacy skills, we find that, in practice, those who are the recipients of such education often, when engaged in everyday

acts of reading, operate with a model that is altogether different. We will characterize this model as **pragmatic** rather than **ideological** in order to reflect our concern with text as it is used in different acts of communication: the term thus relates our work to that branch of linguistics known as **pragmatics**, while, in its non-technical sense, it evokes the common-sense view of language and text that ordinary readers work with. Our ultimate concern in this study is to show the dissonance between the autonomous and pragmatic models when it comes to interpreting the kinds of texts used in reading assessment. Before we can do this, however, we need to examine the autonomous model in greater detail in order to understand more fully its seductive powers.

Assumptions of the autonomous model

As a framework for our discussion, we will consider two related aspects of autonomy, both of which Street assumes in his own discussion but which he does not explicitly distinguish. First is the idea that text itself, when compared to speech, can be viewed as autonomous—namely, that it can, in principle, be independent of the situation in which it is produced and even of the writer who produces it. Second is the idea that once individuals have become literate, they are in control of an autonomous skill, one which they can apply to any text in order to apprehend meaning in a new way.

Autonomy of text

The autonomy of text is mentioned at several points by the writers in question (Hildyard and Olson 1978, 10; Olson 1977, 268, 270; Ong 1982, 78; Goody and Watt 1968, 40), and they attribute it to a number of different factors. First, there is the nature of the alphabetic system by means of which text has developed in the western world. "The system was easy, explicit, and unambiguous," say Goody and Watt (1968, 41), while Olson asserts:

> An elliptical or nonexplicit writing system, like nonexplicit statements, tends to rely on prior knowledge and expectancies. An explicit writing system unambiguously represents meanings—the meaning is in the text.... The Greek alphabet was the first to

> approach such a degree of explicitness and yet to be simple enough to provide a base for mass literacy.... The faithful transcription of the sound patterns of speech by a fully developed alphabet has freed writing from some of the ambiguities of oral language. (1977, 264-265)

But as Ong points out, not all of the "sound patterns of speech" are represented in writing, for a text lacks what linguists describe as the **paraverbal**:

> In a text ... the words ... lack their full phonetic qualities. In ... speech, a word must have one or another intonation or tone of voice—lively, excited, quiet, incensed, resigned, or whatever. It is impossible to speak a word ... without any intonation. In a text punctuation can signal tone [only] minimally.... (1982, 101-102)

Writing also omits what linguists describe as the **nonverbal**, the rich array of gestures and facial expressions that carry meaning in face-to-face communication. This absence of the paraverbal and the nonverbal, according to Ong, leads writers to a more exclusive dependence on the particular words that they use:

> To make yourself clear without gesture, without facial expression, without intonation, without a real hearer, you have to foresee circumspectly all possible meanings a statement may have for any possible reader in any possible situation, and you have to make your language work so as to come clear all by itself, with no existential context. (1982, 104)

Thus the very limitations of written language lead to much the same thing as do its strengths: they require, as Olson puts it, that the meaning be in the text.

Second, while text is produced in a specific place and at a specific time, it may—and probably will—be read in a different place and at a later point in time. This fact makes any deictic reference to space or time useless, unless some anchor, such as an address or a date, is included within the text itself. Similarly, no meaningful reference can be made to entities outside the text unless they are in some way identified. Thus explicitness becomes, according to this model, a peculiar characteristic of written language, for a text must state within itself what its orientations and purposes are and to whom and what it refers. This has the effect, it is claimed, of shifting the locus of meaning from the context surrounding words to the words themselves. As Olson puts it,

> to serve the requirements of written language ... all of the information relevant to the communication of intention must be present in the text.... If the text is formally adequate and the reader fails to understand, that is the reader's problem. The meaning is in the text. (1977, 277)

A third characteristic of text is that it normally creates a separation between the writer and the reader. Writers do not necessarily know who their readers will be, and thus much less can be assumed, according to the proponents of the autonomous model, in terms of shared knowledge and presuppositions. According to Olson, it was the invention of printing that particularly contributed to the distancing of reader from writer:

> [The writer's] task now was to create autonomous text—to write in such a manner that the sentence was an adequate, explicit representation of meaning, relying on no implicit premises or personal interpretations. (1977, 268)

Readers, for their part, usually have no way of addressing the writer of the words they are reading. This very lack of access, according to Ong, gives text much greater authority than talk. He compares text to the "autonomous discourse" of oral cultures, as expressed in "fixed ritual formulas ... as well as in vatic sayings or prophesies:"

> Writing, and even more print, has some of this vatic quality. Like the oracle or the prophet, the book relays an utterance from a source, the one who really "said" or wrote the book. The author might be challenged if only he or she could be reached, but the author cannot be reached in any book. There is no way directly to refute a text. After absolutely total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before. This is one reason why "the book says" is popularly tantamount to "it is true." (1982, 78-79)

In effect, text is independent, not only of the context of its production and of the reactions of those who receive it, but also, in this view, of the very person who produced it in the first place.

Finally, the fact that text is dissociated from its producer has resulted, according to Olson, in a shift in the relative weighting of the functions that language performs:

> As Austin (1962) and Halliday (1970) argue, any utterance serves at least two functions simultaneously—the rhetorical or interpersonal function and the logical or ideational function. In ... speech, the interpersonal function is primary; if a sentence is inappropriate to a particular listener, the utterance is a failure. In ... text, the logical or ideational functions become primary, presumably because of the indirect relation between writer and reader. The emphasis, therefore, can shift from simple communication to truth, to "getting it right".... It may be this realignment of functions in written language that brings about the greater demand for explicitness and the higher degree of conventionalization. (1977, 278)

Thus text becomes, in Olson's view, "an instrument of considerable power for building an abstract and coherent theory of reality," something quite different from talk, which, he suggests, is "an instrument of limited power for exploring abstract ideas," although it is "a universal means of sharing our understanding of concrete situations and practical actions." (1977, 168)

Autonomy of skill

In another paper, Olson (1975) presents arguments that relate more to the second aspect of the autonomous model of literacy—namely, the notion that literacy is an autonomous skill, applicable to any text and having intrinsic cognitive consequences:

> When a child learns to read and write, he is not just learning a code for representing speech. Implicit in the very nature of the alphabetic writing principle are a set of consequences—a way of representing events, a way of biasing statements, a way of relating sentences to users, a way of dividing society.... He is encountering a new form of expression and communication, a form of language adapted to a particular set of "rational" functions and a particular conception of reality. (1975, 117-118)

This "new form of expression and communication" operates at a number of different levels. The first, or primary, level is that of the twenty-odd graphic symbols on which an alphabetic writing system is ordinarily based: a person who is

learning to read must learn to perceive a continuous stream of sound as a sequence of discrete elements. Moreover, most of these discrete elements—the consonants—are, it is claimed, "non-sounds;" that is, in actual speech production they do not occur in isolation, for vowel sounds have to be added to make them pronounceable (Havelock 1973, 10-11, cited in Olson 1975, 122-123). Thus, in the very first stages of learning to read, children are dealing with an abstraction from reality, a fact that "contributes enormously to the difficulty in the learning of decoding skills." (Olson 1975, 123)

Before long, moreover, learners encounter a further level of abstraction, especially when they are learning a language like English. Citing Noam Chomsky (1970), Olson points out that "spelling patterns reflect not the sound patterns of the language, but rather the underlying structures to which phonological rules apply" (1975, 123-124). In such pairs as **courage** and **courageous**, for example, or **medicate** and **medicine**, the fact that the first parts of the words are spelled in the same way shows not that they sound the same but that they have a common lexical base. Perception of such lexical relations may even, according to Olson, be dependent on the ability to read:

> The mastery of literacy may be the occasion for a significant step in the organization of one's meanings—the meaning of different words such as **text-context** or **price-precious** becomes apparent because of their related spelling patterns. (1975, 126)

In addition to illuminating morphological relationships between lexical items, the ability to read, claims Olson, also creates a concern with paradigmatic ones:

> Definitions are an essentially literate enterprise—the attempt to provide the explicit meaning of a word in terms of the other words in the system—outside the context of ongoing speech. (1975, 131)

Thus, at the lexical as well as the graphemic level, reading entails a new perception of language and of meaning.

This is equally true, Olson maintains, at the sentence and discourse levels. In an article written with Hildyard (1980), he explores in some detail the notion of **literal meaning**, which is represented as a variation of **speaker's meaning**.

Speaker's meaning (M), the authors suggest, is derived from two factors: linguistic, or sentence, meaning (S), on the one hand, and the listener's understanding of the world (W), on the other. If there is lack of congruence between the two, listeners must either assume that the speaker's meaning is indirect or metaphorical (Searle 1975), or they must modify either S or W in the equation. In casual speech, presuppositions about the world, W, tend to be held constant, and where there is lack of correspondence, it is the sentence meaning, S, that is altered—that is, listeners are prone to assume error on the part of the speaker or in their own hearing to arrive at pragmatic meaning. Literal meaning, on the other hand, is more dependent on S, and if speakers or readers are to arrive at it when S does not, in fact, correspond to W, they must use the sentence meaning to modify their presuppositions, so as to create a "possible world stipulated by S" (1980, 18). In effect, in aligning the word and the world, those concerned with literal meaning are willing to change the latter in order to keep the former stable; or to use Coleridge's phrase, they engage in "a willing suspension of disbelief" about the world in order to remain faithful to the word.

Literal meaning is connected to literacy not only because of the etymological association between the words but because the ability to keep S constant—the preservation of "the very words"—is largely dependent on writing. Olson and Hildyard do concede that there are some oral means of preserving in exact form at least some part of what is said, but

> long term oral memory for language ... is rarely word for word, verbatim memory ... [whereas] writing is an instrument par excellence for preserving "the very words" and for making possible [their] re-reading and re-analysis. (1980, 8)

Further, they cite experimental evidence to suggest that the ability to arrive at literal meaning (when this does not correspond with expectations based on presuppositions about the world) develops through schooling: for example, when presented with stories describing an unnatural sequence of events (a boy, for instance, putting on his coat before he puts on his sweater) and asked to make inferences from them, fifth graders performed significantly better than third

graders, and third graders better than first graders. Here is how the authors explain these results:

> The inferences ... are based upon the literal meanings of the sentences in the stories ... [and] require that the listener have some means of preserving the semantic structure of S, and of constructing a possible world PW stipulated by S in the derivation of the literal meaning M. This is the form of competence that appears to develop only when the child is well into the school years and perhaps only under the impact of schooling in a literate society. (1980, 39)

Thus reading, it is implied, both enables and encourages people to attend to literal meaning, and it enhances and requires the ability to imagine worlds other than the real one of practical experience. As Olson concludes,

> these worlds frequently depend on "the very words" preserved by means of written language. They are the worlds opened up by texts. (1980, 39)

The autonomous model of literacy and schooling

The writers whom we have been citing are unusually articulate proponents of this way of thinking, but, as Street points out, they are by no means the only persons to subscribe to the autonomous model of literacy. Educated western thought has been dominated by belief in the self-sufficiency of text to convey meaning and in the intrinsic value of being able to read it; and it is this belief—at least at the conscious, articulated level—that has motivated western, and more recently, Asian and African governments in the attempt to provide universal schooling (Graff 1987, Street 1984). The recipients of such schooling seem to subscribe to such a belief, too; as Ong points out, "I have never encountered or heard of an oral culture that does not want to achieve literacy as soon as possible" (1982, 175); or, as one recent entrant into literate culture put it:*

*The writer of this essay is Joseph Yakubu, a student at Saint Peter's Seminary at Yola, in Gongola State of Nigeria from 1979 to 1984. The essay was written in response to an assignment based on a West African School Certificate question about how to abolish illiteracy in Nigeria. Yakubu, like many of his classmates, is

> We have big problems in our society because most of the people are illiterate. So we need to educate our fellowmen of the need to read and write..... Education is the process of developing the body physically, mentally and morally. This development is got from schools, churches, mosques and homes. So there is need for permanent literacy for our countrymen to progress. No country can develope [sic] well without first being educated. (Nigerian secondary school student, 1984)

This is also the popular view of the matter in western societies. Newspapers such as the **New York Times** frequently deplore the numbers of people who—to use the fashionable phrase—are "functionally illiterate," even suggesting that they can be compared to the diseased or physically handicapped.

The autonomous model of literacy also provides the rationale for one of the most influential practices in western education, the formal assessment of what is commonly described as reading comprehension. Such assessment has generally been based on a format that presents readers with a range of relatively short passages—varying in content as well as discourse genre—each followed by a set of tasks. This format can itself be viewed as reflecting the autonomous model of literacy. In the first place, the tasks that are constructed are presumed to have well-defined target responses that readers will inevitably arrive at if they carefully attend to what is in the passage. The text, in other words, is presumed to be autonomous. Moreover, the use of particular texts to determine whether individuals are sufficiently literate (at least in their capacity to understand what they read) presupposes that if they can respond appropriately to these texts, they can also read other texts of comparable difficulty in other situations. The skill, in other words, is presumed to be autonomous—that is, independent of the social situation in which it is practiced.

The Program in Applied Linguistics at Teachers College, Columbia University has conducted several studies of reading tests that lead us to question the above assumptions (Hill 1977, Nix and Schwarz 1977, Hill and Larsen 1983, Parry 1986, Adames 1987, Ingulsrud 1988, Allen 1988). Here we would like to

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himself an example of the transition from "orality" to "literacy," since he belongs to the first generation of his family to be educated.

present some of our most recent work in this area, which shows how one widely used test reflects the assumptions of the autonomous model—and also suffers from its weaknesses.

The Test of Adult Basic Education

The test in question is the Test of Adult Basic Education, hereafter called TABE. It is a standardized test published by CTB/McGraw-Hill and used in adult literacy programs throughout the United States. It contains three major components—reading, mathematics, and language—each of which is tested at easy (E), medium (M), and difficult (D) levels—and, since 1987, at an advanced (A) level as well. The components are further divided in the following ways:

Reading	Vocabulary
	Comprehension
Mathematics	Computation
	Concepts and Applications
Language	Mechanics
	Expression
	Spelling

Given our present concerns, we will confine our attention to the reading comprehension component. In order to provide an overview of how this component has changed during the past decade, we examine representative material, in light of the autonomous and pragmatic models of literacy, from both the 1976 version of the TABE—the one still in use in adult literacy programs in metropolitan New York—and the 1987 version that has just become available. In selecting material from both versions, we have attempted to show not only the range of discourse genres that are represented but also the levels of difficulty that the test

makers have established (to achieve this latter end, we present material from all the different levels). We also show, in many cases, how adult readers of varying backgrounds and levels of education responded to the material. These responses were elicited in a series of recently conducted studies based on think-aloud protocols, interviews, and small-scale experiments. Here, reference to these studies must necessarily be brief, but a number of reports are planned for this series in which they will be presented in detail.

The 1976 Edition of the TABE (TABE-76)

The TABE was originally developed from the California Achievement Test (CAT), a test used at the primary level of education.* The comprehension component of both tests follows the same traditional reading test format, consisting of a series of passages on each of which there are two to eleven tasks, or items; we will hereafter refer to each grouping of a passage and accompanying items as a **unit.**** The relationship between the two tests is made explicit in the **Examiner's Manual** for the TABE-76:

> Adaptation of the CAT ... items was generally limited to changing the language and content of the items to reflect adult usage, experience, and interests. The item content, test organization, and format remained essentially intact. (1976, 1)

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*According to the **Examiner's Manual** for the TABE-76, the three levels correspond to the following grade ranges for the 1970 edition of the CAT:

> TABE, level E = CAT, grades 2.5-4.9
> TABE, level M = CAT, grades 4.5-6.9
> TABE, level D = CAT, grades 6.5-8.9 (1976, 2)

In order to establish these correspondences, the TABE was given to the same population as that on which the CAT was normed—that is, children. It was only when the 1987 edition of the TABE was developed that an adult population was used for norming; the new level A was then equated with grades 8.6-12.9.

** The Examiner's Manual provides no term for this grouping of a passage and items, nor, for that matter, does the manual for any other standardized test we have examined. this lack of a specific term suggests that test makers have not been sufficiently aware of the fact that the functional discourse unit consists of the passage and the items together rather than the passage taken by itself.

Here, in the initial construction of the test, we see in operation the presumption that the skill of literacy is autonomous: adults and children can be given the same reading test because what they do with it is essentially the same—the vastly greater experience that adults bring to the text is simply irrelevant.

TABE-76: Mechanisms of literacy

A close look at individual units shows that the text within each is also treated as autonomous. In the TABE-76 most items call for manipulation of the given text without any reference to a larger context that would give it meaning. This is particularly true of those units that are purportedly designed to determine whether individuals can work with that basic instrument of western literacy—the book. Consider, for example, Units 1 and 2 presented on pages 64-65 of the Appendix. Unit 1 is based on a table of contents that provides readers with an overview of the sequence of topics covered, whereas Unit 2 is based on an alphabetically arranged index that allows them to locate the various places where any one topic is dealt with. As readers use such material in actual books, they are ordinarily moving back and forth between it and the larger text on which it is based. On the test, however, they must deal with it as autonomous. For example, to deal with task 10 in the index unit, they must first go back to the index and find out which span of pages listed there includes **page 108.** Having found that span **(106-110),** they are then able to identify the target response as **working in a community,** the topic that is listed right next to the relevant span of pages. We might note that this task also forces readers to reverse the direction in which they would ordinarily move when using an index: instead of going from a topic to a particular page, they must go from a page to a particular topic.

Unit 3, presented on pages 66-67 of the Appendix, represents another way in which the TABE, as originally designed, requires test takers to treat text as if it were autonomous; and it also illustrates once more the assumption that literacy consists of the ability to manipulate words—and their graphic representation—without regard to what they represent. It is based on a prose passage containing two devices, the table and the formula, both of which are considered by proponents

of the autonomous model (e.g., Goody 1977) to be quintessentially literate. As can be observed, the passage constitutes an autonomous system for presenting information about which parts are being played by members of an acting class and the four separate casts formed by these members. The table lays out this information at the beginning of the passage and then introduces formulas that prompt the readers to manipulate it, first along the vertical axis where members of the same cast are defined as **mates** and then along the horizontal axis where students reading the same part are defined as **companions**. In effect, the passage sets up an information-processing system in which a later mechanism—the formula—presupposes an earlier one—the table.

All the tasks are designed to determine whether readers can recycle information from this system. Consider, for example, how task 36 works: readers must go directly to the table and locate the name **Kelly** in the vertical column labeled **Cast 3**. Having located the name, they can then move directly to the left until they come to the name **Geraldine** in the vertical column labeled **PARTS**. In effect, readers locate the target response by performing a simple spatial alignment within the table:

Geraldine	Chris	Carolyn	Kelly

They must, however, exercise a certain caution: in order to avoid the distractor **Chris** they need to pay attention to the heading at the top of each column, and also to a paraverbal cue (here expressed graphically)—the bold vertical line that separates the names of parts from the names of actors. Throughout the entire exercise no consideration of meaning is involved, for exactly the same system could be used to describe items of diet, geographical features, kinship systems, or virtually anything.

TABE-76: Narrative material

The TABE-76 does, however, include some units that, in principle, reflect a more pragmatic orientation to text. These units are based on short narrative passages which, it will be remembered, are adapted from those used for children in the California Achievement Test; but the adaptations are such, or so the **Examiner's Manual** claims, that the passages will "reflect adult usage, experience, and interests." Bearing these words in mind, let us examine how the narrative presented as Unit 4 on pages 68-69 of the Appendix was adapted. Here we provide the original CAT passage on the left and the adapted TABE passage on the right—the parallel sets of items are not provided, for they are exactly the same except for the necessary change in names (of persons and things) and verb tense (there is one isolated change of a distractor that we will discuss shortly):

The children in Mrs. Kim's room were talking about how to make scrapbooks. Eva said, "I will bring some pictures." "I will bring some scissors," Monty said. Marie said, "And I will bring some paper."	The men in Mr. Smith's office decided to build a model boat. Sam brought some tools from home. Joe brought some wood. Pete brought some string. Mike brought some pictures.
The children decided they would need more paste than they had. To make paste they would need water, flour, and salt. Eva said, "I will bring a pan to mix them in."	The men decided they would need some glue. To make the glue they needed glue powder and water. Joe brought a pan in which to mix them.

The TABE version does not provide much evidence of adult usage. There are occasional shifts in wording (e.g., **paste** to **glue**) that are presumably designed to reflect adult language, but they are at such a superficial level that they merely call attention to the fact that the passage, in its essential structure, remains one obviously written for children in a school context. As to the other criteria mentioned in the manual, we have difficulty imagining what kinds of adult experience and interests are being addressed. The scene that it evokes does not resemble any that we have observed in public places of work. The test makers do, it is true, make one attempt, in the first item, to adjust to the fact that it is now adults

who are engaged in the project, for they change one of the distractors from **playing** to **joking**. It is as if they are not willing, even in setting up a distractor, to represent adults as playing in their place of work, even though it is hard to understand the activity described in the passage in any other way.

We do not wish to belabor these rather obvious points, but they do provide evidence that, despite the declared intention of using passages that refer to adult interests, a passage such as this is, in fact, meant to be treated as autonomous, with readers drawing on it alone rather than on their real-world knowledge. The use of such a bland story fragment with little or no real point forces readers to view the passage simply as material to be manipulated. The nature of the tasks, moreover, calls for just such manipulation. Consider, for example, the second one that requires readers to go back to the passage and identify what the various men brought to the office in order to determine which one "brought more than one thing." In order to do this, readers need to extract relevant bits of information from the last four sentences of the first paragraph and from the final sentence of the second paragraph:

Paragraph 1		
	Sam	tools
	Joe	wood
	Pete	string
	Mike	pictures
Paragraph 2		
	Joe	pan

The target response to this second task is presumably **Joe**, since he is presented as first bringing wood and then later a pan. There is, however, a trap: if readers take the plural forms **tools** and **pictures** seriously, as they are likely to do if they actually envisage the situation, they may well select one of the distractors, since either Sam or Mike could also be described as bringing "more than one thing." Evidently the word **thing** in this item does not refer to the things of the real world, but the things of the text—that is, the words.

This problem was potentially present in the original CAT item as well, as indicated by a parallel extraction of relevant bits:

Paragraph 1		
	Eva	pictures
	Monty	scissors
	Marie	paper
Paragraph 2		
	Eva	pan

As can be seen, however, the choice of **Eva** as the target response is easier than the choice of **Joe**: readers are less likely to be distracted by the singular mass noun **paper**, and, although the noun **scissors** is plural in form, it may also be a less attractive choice, since a pair of scissors is thought of as a single object. But, of course, if one considers the actual situation described, it seems likely that Monty brought more than one pair of scissors and Marie more than one piece of paper; there were, after all, at least three children involved in making the scrapbooks. The fact that successful test takers are unlikely to choose these distractors is further evidence that they have learned to attend to exact wording on a reading test rather than to their pragmatic understanding of the situation represented.

Before leaving this unit, we might call attention to how poorly worded the final task is: none of the choices provided can, in fact, "finish the story correctly." Consider, for a moment, how awkward the target response is when placed at the end of the story:

> The men decided they would need some glue. To make the glue they needed glue powder and water. Joe brought a pan in which to mix them. *The men decided to make their own glue.

As the asterisk indicates, this sentence is altogether out of place: readers have just learned that the men have decided to make glue, and now they are ready to move on to a description of the actual glue-making.

There is one other narrative unit on the TABE-76 that we would like to call attention to, for the way in which it was adapted illustrates well Olson's claim about the importance of attention to exact wording. This narrative is presented as Unit 5

on pages 70-71 of the Appendix (we again present below the original CAT passage on the left and the adapted TABE version on the right):*

The big store looked very far away. Benny and Al wondered if they would ever get there. It was very hot and crowded on the sidewalks. They had to squeeze between the people as they ran. At last they came to the big glass doors. The doors swung open and they were soon inside the cool building. They rushed down the stairs to the toy shop. Right in front of them were the shiny skates which they had come to buy.	The big store looked very far away. Al wondered if he would get there in time. It was very hot and crowded on the sidewalks. He had to squeeze between the people as he walked. At last he came to the big glass doors. The doors swung open and he was soon inside the cool building. He rushed down the stairs to the shoe department. Right in front of him were the black shoes that he had come to buy.

We can again observe how little change there is in the adapted passage. The two most obvious alterations are

(1) two characters named Benny and Al have been replaced by one character named Al

(2) skates have been replaced by shoes as the desired commodities.

Moreover, the items are worded in exactly the same way, except for the two changes listed above. In item 19, for example, **The boys** is replaced by **Al** in the stem and among the choices **skates** is replaced by **shoes**. Such exacting parallelism is reflected in all of the items. Hence it is surprising to discover that there is, in fact, a different target response for item 20:

*As can be seen, this unit includes ten items, which constitutes one-quarter of those present in the entire reading comprehension component. The piling up of so many items within a single unit offsets one of the main advantages of using multiple texts—namely, that no single text should unduly influence the performance of test takers.

Benny and Al were in a hurry to get to the store because they were	Al was in a hurry to get to the store because he was
excited	excited
hungry	hungry
late	late
tired	tired

For the CAT version the target response is **excited**, whereas for the TABE it is **late**. Given the close parallelism of the two passages, how can there be such a divergence on what appears to be the same task? The answer again lies in the close attention to exact wording. Certainly in reading either passage, the reader is able to imagine the character(s) as hurrying because they were **excited** or **late** (or, for that matter, even **tired**, given how "hot and crowded" the sidewalks were and how difficult it was "to squeeze between the people"). In the case of the TABE version, however, the second sentence makes explicit Al's concern that he not be late:

> Al wondered if he would get there in time.

Given the presence of the words **in time**, the reader is forced to select **late** as the target response. In the case of the CAT version, however, those words are not present (there is, rather, a noncommittal **ever**), and so other interpretations of the characters' hurrying are possible. What, then, leads readers to choose **excited** as the target response? Attention to exact wording can again be invoked, for the only place in the passage that actually describes the characters' hurrying is the seventh sentence:

> They rushed down the stairs to the toy shop.

At this point the boys are already inside the store so the possibility of its closing before they arrive is ruled out. What comes into sharp focus is the toy shop (mentioned in the same sentence) and what it contains (mentioned in the sentence that follows):

> Right in front of them were the shiny skates which they had come to buy.

The fact that it is **shiny skates** that Benny and Al want to buy makes readers think of them as young boys, and this, of course, further supports the choice of **excited**.

Before leaving this unit, we would like to report briefly on a study we conducted on the TABE version of this item. We asked 30 adults to read the passage (without the items) for thirty seconds and then, after the passage was removed, to (1) summarize what they had read and (2) state how old they thought Al was. After collecting what they had written, we asked them to respond to the test item concerned with the reason for Al's hurry.

As we expected, the age that readers ascribed to Al was related to both their summaries and their responses to the item. Those who thought of Al as quite young were more prone to select **excited** (bear in mind that, when responding to the item, they did not have access to the passage and hence could not focus on the exact wording in time that leads to the choice of late). Moreover, they were better able to recall the textual details associated with a young boy's point of view:

—the big store looked very far away
—he had to squeeze between people
—he came to the big glass doors

Those who pictured Al as older were better able to select the target response late and to recall the textual details associated with that choice (e.g., **Al wondered if he would get there in time**). There was one individual who identified Al as a fairly old man (65-70 years old), and he selected the distractor **tired**. Included in his summary were the details associated with a diminished point of view (e.g., **the big store looked very far away**), suggesting that such a point of view can be as readily associated with the old as with the young (this study will be presented in detail in a forthcoming article by Hill, Anderson, and Watt).

TABE-76: Expository material

In both the narrative units discussed above readers are likely to find the tasks confusing if they approach the passages imaginatively, as they presumably would, or should approach a story they were reading for pleasure. The items, in short, are eliciting an inappropriate style of reading for the material provided.

Those units that include expository passages may, however, be more representative of what is needed in reading real texts, for it is to the expository mode—what Olson (1977) calls the essay text—that the autonomous model of literacy is particularly related. Let us therefore consider the expository units on the TABE-76, beginning with one presented as Unit 6 on pages 72-73 of the Appendix.

All four of the items call for a recycling of local detail, and it is the words that are to be manipulated rather than the content. Consider, for example, the first one that recycles information from the first sentence (we will use the terms **passage version** and **item version** to refer to the original material in the passage and that material as it is recycled in the item; note that the item version syntactically integrates the item stem and the target response, which is placed in bold):

> Passage version:
> Most elephants we see come from the jungles of Asia or Africa.
>
> Item version:
> Most elephants live in **jungles.**

It is immediately obvious how similar the two versions are in form. If, however, we consider their meaning, they are not at all the same. The item version makes a statement about elephants in general, whereas the passage version deals only with a restricted group—those that we see, presumably in zoos. The item version may therefore not be true, even in terms of the information provided by the passage. Moreover, the passage itself may provide inaccurate information since most elephants, at least in Africa, live in savannah terrain (it is, of course, conceivable that more of the elephants that end up in zoos come from forested areas). If this passage is treated as information rather than as an exercise in manipulating words, item 38 can be confusing, especially for someone who already has some knowledge of the subject.

This same manipulation of words is called for even when the expository material is itself more complex. Consider, for example, Unit 7 on pages 74-75 of the Appendix. The passage, reflecting an encyclopedic style of writing, is unusually long and rich in detail; and most of the items are directed at relatively

local points (only items 28 and 32 elicit a more global response). As with the previous unit, the first item retrieves information from the first sentence:

> Passage version:
> Scientifically, butterflies ... are grouped under the heading **Lepidoptera**.
>
> Item version:
> Scientifically, butterflies are called **Lepidoptera**.

Unfortunately, the items do not continue to follow the order of the text, so readers are forced to spend a good deal of time searching through the passage for particular words and phrases. Item 29, for example, requires readers to find material in the seventh—and final—paragraph of the passage:

> a ... chrysalis ... hangs on the leaf for ten days to two weeks while it develops into an adult butterfly

It is immediately followed by an item that requires readers to conduct their search for detail in the second paragraph:

> A butterfly has wiry antennae.

Such defiance of temporal sequence can be frustrating to readers working under the time constraints of a testing situation. Their need to search rapidly for scattered detail over a long passage leads them to abandon the strategies that they would ordinarily use in comprehending expository text. In effect, the text becomes for them an assortment of individual words and phrases to be searched through rather than a coherent body of information to be absorbed.

The 1987 Edition of the TABE (TABE-87)

As we pointed out above, there is a new edition of the TABE that adopts, as a matter of stated policy, a "communicative"—that is, in our terms, a more pragmatic—approach to reading assessment. According to a brochure advertising the TABE-87, this new approach affects the kinds of passages selected as well as the kinds of items constructed. The passages now include a broader range of material representing what adult readers are likely to encounter in their everyday

experience: for example, advertising and business letters are included alongside narrative and expository material, while units based on a table of contents, an index, or prose built around a table and formulas have been abandoned. Moreover, the items, according to the **Examiner's Manual**, appear likely to lead readers to draw more on their pragmatic knowledge, for they require "analyzing characters and interpreting events," in addition to the more traditional kinds of activity such as "extracting details and identifying main ideas" (1987, 2); and the test makers do, in fact, provide a classification of items on a worksheet called the **Objectives Mastery Summary,*** which presents readers as doing far more than the manipulation of words and phrases characteristic of the old TABE. The following are the aspects of text, which, according to this classification, literate adults should be able to process:

Passage Details
- who
- what
- where
- when

Character Analysis
- feeling
- motive
- trait

Central Thought
- main idea
- author purpose
- author viewpoint
- tone, mood

Interpreting Events
- conclusion
- cause, effect
- predict outcome

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*This worksheet is to be used by administrators and teachers in creating a diagnostic profile for individuals who take the TABE-87. The items on other sections of the test—for example, mathematics computation—are classified in comparably detailed fashion.

Forms of Writing
- fact, opinion
- biography, autobiography

Writing Techniques
- figurative techniques
- persuasive techniques
- structural techniques

This scheme suggests that the test makers have constructed items requiring readers to deal with the actual meaning of text (e.g., those placed under a category such as **character analysis**) as well as to recycle local detail (e.g., those placed under the category **passage detail**). Such an approach promises a completely different type of test, one that should be more reflective of actual reading practices in our society, and hence, perhaps, one that is more in accordance with a pragmatic model of literacy. Let us now consider some of the test material to see how well this promise is fulfilled.

TABE-87: Narrative material

The narrative material used on the TABE-87 does contrast sharply with that used on the TABE-76. As far as the passages are concerned, the test makers have drawn on material that they think is likely to hold interest for adult readers: there are, for example, passages about seeing a doctor, finding a job, or running one's own business. Consider, for example, the narrative material in Unit 8 on pages 76-77 of the Appendix, which, as indicated there, is used at both levels E and M.* Such material clearly reflects more a world of "adult experience and interest" than does, say, a story that tells of men planning to build a model boat at the office. The episode begins with a man, presumably sitting alone in his living room, thinking

*We will again draw on material from all levels of the test in order to provide some notion of the range of difficulty. We are not certain as to why a particular unit is used at separate levels of the TABE. It is, of course, fairly common on standardized tests that the same unit is presented as a relatively difficult one on a lower level and as a relatively easy one on a higher level; and yet we could find only three examples of this practice on the TABE-87 and it is this absence of a systematic pattern that we find puzzling.

about what his doctor has instructed him to do in order to deal with high blood pressure: take medicine daily, follow a low-salt diet, and get regular exercise. In the final paragraph we learn that the man thinks the exercise will be easy but the diet difficult; he is planning, however, to follow all the doctor's instructions so that he will "soon feel like doing all the things his family wanted him to do, like camping and fishing" (one does wonder why his family wants him to engage in such strenuous activities if he is so ill). It may, indeed, be the case that some of the adults who take the TABE have had similar experiences and so can identify with the situation.

When we come to consider the items, however, we find that they still encourage the reader to treat the text as if it were autonomous. The first one is a 'mostly-about' task, which has, of course, always been a basic resource on reading tests. It simply calls for information to be recycled at a global rather than a local level. The three items that follow, moreover, all call for recycling of local detail: 32 calls for a **who**-detail, 33 for a **what**-detail, and 34 for a **why**-detail. In each instance, the information to be recycled can be located in the passage:

Item 32
Passage version:
She [the doctor] also said that Sam needed to lose weight

Item version:
His doctor suggested that Sam lose weight.

Item 33:
Passage version:
Sticking to a low-salt diet would be the hard part.

Item version:
Sam thought to **follow a special diet** would be hard for him to do.

Item 34
Passage version:
Last week he had gone to the doctor with painful headaches.

Item version:
Sam went to the doctor because he **was having headaches.**

We can here observe a certain dissonance between the passage selected and the items constructed: the passage invites the readers to consider the text as an instrument of communication that is related to the world outside itself, but the items demand that they still treat it as autonomous. Furthermore, if readers do draw on practical experience, it may actually lead them astray. In this passage, as is often the case on the TABE-87, a woman is represented as occupying a professional role—in this case she is a doctor. One of the distractors in the second item, however, is seemingly built around readers' more traditional expectations about women's roles: **his wife** might well be selected by readers who are unfamiliar with women occupying professional positions (i.e., in processing the passage sentence beginning **She also said**, they would interpret the pronoun as referring to Sam's wife rather than to his doctor); and it is, of course, precisely the adults taking these tests who are generally less exposed to professional women. As Olson would put it, such readers are being asked to construct a "possible world" from what they find in the text and to base their answer on that world rather than on the real world of their own experience.

This same dissonance between passage and items is particularly noticeable as we consider a new kind of narrative material used on the TABE-87: excerpts from biographies of women (e.g., Amelia Earhart) or of members of an ethnic minority who are sometimes women as well (e.g., Sarah Winnemucca). One such excerpt, presented as Unit 9 on pages 78-79 in the Appendix, describes the career of a black musician who died at an early age. While in the passage there is an obvious attempt to appeal to minority interests, the items remain similar to those used on the old TABE. Items 25, 26, and 30 all call for recycling local detail, and as in the **Lepidoptera** unit, the items tend to echo the very words of the passage:

> Item 25
> Passage version:
> He [Calvin Simmons] was called the "Maestro Kid" because, by the age of eleven, he was conducting the San Francisco Boys' Chorus.
>
> Item version:
> Calvin Simmons was called the "Maestro Kid" because at age eleven he **conducted a chorus**.

Item 26
Passage version:
Simmons liked to present exciting musical programs. He included music he knew the audiences enjoyed and also works that were unfamiliar to them.

Item version:
Calvin Simmons include[d] unfamiliar music in his programs [because] **he wanted to present exciting combinations.**

Item 30
Passage version:
He studied piano in high school and was invited to play a piano solo with the Cleveland Orchestra.

Item version:
Calvin Simmons play[ed] piano with the Cleveland Orchestra **during high school.**

In every instance the reader is required to identify the relevant content words and place them in a different syntactic combination.

Items 24 and 28 do not require such obvious recycling, but readers can manage to avoid the distractors by concentrating on the very words of the text, and readers whose cultural background differs from that of the American mainstream are forced, in this instance, to rely heavily on an autonomous approach. Item 24, for example, asks about Calvin Simmons' sense of humor. Nothing, of course, is more culturally determined than humor, and, to several of the students whom we interviewed, the target response **imitating opera stars** simply did not seem funny. They were accordingly attracted to a distractor, **driving a truck onto the stage**, which certainly seemed odd enough to be laughable. But the initial words of the item—**According to the passage**—dictate that if item information is new, it cannot be considered as valid; and that is, of course, why the distractor is unacceptable. **Imitating opera stars**, however, is on target, regardless of what one's conception of humor is, because a clue is provided by the word **entertained**:

> He ... **entertained** the chorus by dressing in elaborate costumes and pretending to be famous opera stars.

Of all the words in the passage this is the closest to **displays ... sense of humor** in the item stem. Similarly, for item 28 the target response is the one that most closely matches a word used in the passage:

> Passage version:
> Calvin Simmons ... had never deserted his **devotion** to music.
>
> Item version:
> Calvin Simmons could be described as **dedicated**.

This leaves us with only two items out of the seven in this unit that do not depend on such matching of words or synonyms. Item 27 asks:

> What in the passage indicates that Calvin Simmons had an open mind?

There is no phrase in the passage that corresponds to **an open mind**, while all of the proffered answers are close paraphrases of passage material. The matching strategy, therefore, will not work in this case: the answer depends on the reader's conception of an open mind—another culturally determined notion—and can, in fact, be deduced from the item alone, provided that this conception corresponds to the test makers'.

So item 29, which asks about the purpose of the passage, is apparently the only one that encourages readers to consider the text as a whole. But here again there are problems. First, it seems strange that such a task should be hidden among low-level ones, appearing as the sixth out of seven: the normal procedure for a proficient reader is to get the general idea first and then go on to consider local detail. Second, when we look at the stem of the item alone, the answer seems obvious, for the last sentence of the passage reads

> Continued help for young talent can be a fitting memorial to Calvin Simmons.

The purpose of the text from which the passage was drawn must surely be to raise money for some fund established in Calvin Simmons' memory to provide scholarships for young musicians. But none of the responses offered suggests that: the reader has to make do with **tell about a talented young man's**

remarkable success, which does provide the best summary of the information in the passage, although it says nothing of its real communicative purpose. It is as if the passage were merely an autonomous vehicle for transmitting information rather than a piece of writing designed to elicit actual responses from those who read it.

When we examine the **Objectives Mastery Summary**, we discover that the test makers' classification does not accord with our own. For example, two of the three items, which, as we showed above, recycle passage material nearly word for word, were not placed under **passage detail**. Item 25 is placed under **interpreting events (cause, effect)** and item 26 under **character analysis (motive)**. In both instances, the test makers focus on the passage content to be recycled rather than on the activity involved in performing the task. Conversely, the test makers do place item 24 under **passage detail**, even though, as we have shown, it calls for more than a simple recycling of passage material (readers must first interpret the expression *sense of humor* before they can search for passage material to recycle). Hence we can conclude that, with respect to the three tasks just described, the test makers' classification is directly opposed to our own.

Such disparity between the test makers' classification of particular items and our own analysis has been a recurrent feature of our work with the TABE; and in a forthcoming report Elizabeth Asch will present evidence that experienced teachers in adult education are not able to apply the test makers' categories consistently. The problem is that the various categories are not mutually exclusive, being based on inconsistent criteria. The category **passage detail**, for example, is apparently based on what readers have to do in order to arrive at the target response, i.e., recycle passage material. The categories **character analysis** and **interpreting events** seem, on the other hand, to be based on passage content. It is thus quite possible for a single item to be classified under different headings. Furthermore, labels for the categories may themselves be misleading. **Interpreting events**, for instance, is not so much concerned with events in the represented world as with propositions in the text itself (which often represent states and actions as well as events) and the explicitly stated relationship between them. An example of this problem is the last item in the unit about Sam Wells. Here the item stem is **Sam went to the doctor because he** and the target response is **was having**

headaches. Following the test makers' approach to item 25 in the unit about Calvin Simmons, we would classify the above item as **interpreting events (cause, effect).** According to the **Objectives Mastery Summary,** however, the test makers classified it as **passage detail (what).** The best explanation we can find for their unwillingness, in this instance, to describe the item as requiring discernment of cause and effect comes from the surface form of the passage version: **[Sam Wells] had gone to the doctor with painful headaches.** The causal relationship is there, but it is not explicitly stated. Again, as this item, along with others, shows, the test makers' classification is confusing, for it requires that each item be placed within a single category. It is clear, however, that the item requires readers to do more than one thing in order to arrive at the target response: it calls for interpretation as well as selection of detail, much as did the item about Calvin Simmons' sense of humor.

Added to these various sources of confusion is a more fundamental one that pervades item classification on standardized tests: it is the target response alone that controls how a given item is classified; and yet anyone who has worked with the multiple-choice format knows that the real demands of a given item are anchored in the total configuration of choices, i.e., the reader has to work through each choice, evaluate what its particular demands are, and then come up with some way of evaluating which choice is, in fact, the most appropriate one. Such a process forces readers to develop an overall tactical approach, no matter how implicit it may remain, for selecting one choice over the others as they move from item to item (Aronowitz 1984); and it is the readers' reliance on such an approach that is not accounted for in test makers' current modes of item classification. As we continue with our analysis of the TABE-87, we will have frequent occasion to point out how misleading its particular scheme of classification is.

TABE-87: Expository material

As we turn to expository units on the 1987 TABE, we can begin by reiterating how the material selected differs markedly from that selected for the earlier version of the test. There, as exemplified by the units based on the elephant and the Lepidoptera, expository passages dealt primarily with the natural world

(one that includes material such as the history of wheat and the geography of Mexico). When we come to the new TABE, however, we discover that expository material is drawn from the social as well as the natural world; and as already pointed out, it is a social world deemed to be of particular interest to adults who are likely to take the TABE, i.e., those enrolled in adult literacy programs. Consider, for example, the expository material presented as Unit 10 on page 80 of the Appendix. The passage in Unit 10, as indicated, is used at level E, but it is also used at level M with a somewhat different set of items. We provide below the two sets of items:

Level E

22 The author of the passage probably wants the reader to
- F avoid becoming a single parent
- G learn why single parents aren't married
- H know how children feel about single parents
- J understand more about single parents

23 According to the passage, it is often very hard for a single parent to
- A keep a good job
- B find a support group
- C talk about personal problems
- D take care of everything that needs to be done*

24 According to the passage, single parenting
- F has rewards
- G is necessary
- H has few demands
- J is a popular choice

25 According to the passage, which of the following is usually a goal of single-parent groups?
- A offering medical care
- B providing emotional support
- C arranging day care for children
- D organizing a Little League team

*In examining the four choices for (23), one can observe a gradual increase in length with the result that (D), the target response, is more than twice as long as (A). The greater length may itself cue (D) to a seasoned test taker.

Level M

1 The author of the passage probably wants the reader to
   A avoid becoming a single parent
   B learn why single parents aren't married
   C know how children feel about single parents
   D understand more about single parents

2 According to the passage, it is often very hard for a single parent to
   F keep a good job
   G find a support group
   H talk about personal problems
   J take care of everying that need to be done

3 According to the passage, which of these best describes single parents?
   A young
   B lonely
   C selfish
   D hardworking

As can be seen, the first two items are the same at the two levels, but the last two at level E are replaced by a single one at level M. In the **Objectives Mastery Summary**, the following classification is provided for the two sets of items:

Level E

22 central thought (author purpose)
23 passage detail (what)
24 passage detail (what)
25 passage detail (what)

Level M

1 central thought (author purpose)
2 passage detail (what)
3 character analysis (trait)

According to this classification, at the higher level a single **character analysis** item has replaced two **passage detail** items at the lower level. This substitution was presumably designed to raise the level of difficulty of this unit, calling upon readers to do more than simply recycle local detail. When we examine,

however, the two items that were removed and the one that was put in their place, we are not at all certain that the level E version is, in fact, easier than the level M one. Items classified under **passage detail** do not necessarily call for the reader just to match up the passage version and the item version of similar material. It is true that we observed that kind of exercise when we discussed items based on narrative material, and we can see one example of it here—in the second item that is used at both levels:

> Passage version:
> One of the hardest parts of single parenting is making sure that everything gets done.
>
> Item version:
> According to the passage, it is often very hard for a single parent to **take care of everything that needs to be done.**

When we come to consider the two items that were removed, however, we discover that such a straightforward matching exercise doesn't work. Consider, for example, what readers must do to select the target response for item 24. Essentially, they must eliminate all the distractors and then, as it were, choose the target response by default. They can easily reject **has few demands** since the major concern of the passage is to show how many demands a single parent has, but the other two distractors are more difficult to eliminate, particularly if readers are stimulated by this material to use their real-world knowledge. Such knowledge might lead them to think of single parenting as either **necessary** or a **popular choice**; and in either case, they could find passage material to lend support to their idea. The first sentence, **Many people are single parents**, might be matched with **single parenting is a popular choice**; and **Single parents have to be both "mother" and "father"** might be matched with **single parenting is necessary** (such necessity would, of course, be concerned only with the single parent playing a double role and not with whether single parenting is required in the first place). Here again we can observe that material designed to arouse readers' interest may, in fact, lead them, particularly given the lure of certain distractors, to approach the text pragmatically and thus be led away from the target response. In order to remain focused on **has rewards**, readers must actively resist their

pragmatic knowledge and focus on the only choice which, according to the passage, is strictly true (the final sentence speaks of the rewards of raising children).

The item that was substituted at the higher level can also lead to a tension between pragmatic and autonomous orientations to the text. On the basis of real-world knowledge, readers might think of single parents as either young or lonely; and in the case of the latter conception, they can manage to find a certain amount of textual support. Single parents are described, in the first paragraph, as being both "mother" and "father" and, in the final paragraph, as needing to join support groups. The passage does not, however, come out and state that single parents are actually lonely. In the case of the target response hardworking, however, readers can find a good deal of text that overtly supports this notion. In fact, the whole of the second paragraph is given over to documenting how hardworking single parents are.* Given the amount of textual support for the choice of hardworking, we find that the item used at the higher level—which was classified as character analysis (trait)—is, in fact, easier than the items used at the lower level—which were classified as passage detail (what). As already suggested, we do not find that the items at higher levels of the TABE-87 are necessarily more difficult.

TABE-87: Advertising

In addition to narrative and expository material, the TABE-87 uses a variety of other material to replace the overtly autonomous material used on the TABE-76, i.e., passages based on a table of contents, an index, or prose containing a table and formulas. The kinds of text structure that have been introduced can be characterized, for the most part, as expressing interactional functions rather than purely transactional ones. Consider, for example, the editorial presented as Unit 11

*We might note, however, that the hard work is presented along middle-class lines: there is mention of Little League (but not of baseball itself) and of a costume that needs to be made for a play. We suspect that the familiar conception of poor single parents as not being sufficiently hard-working and self-reliant may have influenced, albeit unconsciously, the construction of this particular test material.

on page 81 in the Appendix. It begins much as an expository piece of writing might, focusing, as it were, on a body of factual information to be transmitted. As it progresses, however, it increasingly functions like advertising, culminating in an unabashed exhortation to the reader to start eating the "natural way" today.

It is quite difficult to read this particular passage as autonomous text. The topic—how natural foods can improve personal health—is one about which readers are likely to have a number of ideas that can interfere with such a reading. During our interviewing we found that interference was particularly noticeable in readers' understanding of the central notion of the editorial—that of natural foods itself. Their conception of natural foods seemed to be permeated by their own cultural experience. One Chinese reader, for example, interpreted the word **natural** to mean 'raw' as opposed to 'cooked' (he then pointed out how a parallel Chinese term had a similar meaning with reference to food); and an Italian reader interpreted **natural** to mean 'fresh' as opposed to 'old' or 'stale,' citing her own experience of buying fruits and vegetables from the local market on a daily basis. For each of these readers, the particular interpretation of natural foods strongly influenced their understanding of the passage—and given that the term **natural foods** is centrally present in all the items, neither reader was able to handle them with any ease. In responding to the final item, the Italian reader, for example, selected the distractor **They are fresher than processed foods.**

Readers' difficulties in understanding the author's use of **natural foods** are, no doubt, related to a certain fuzziness within the editorial itself. In the first paragraph **natural foods** is directly opposed to **processed foods**—the author writes **by increasing their consumption of natural foods, rather than processed foods, they will feel better.** The second paragraph states, however, that **natural foods contain few, if any, added chemicals or preservatives,** hence allowing for the possibility that natural foods can, at least to some degree, be processed. In order to resolve this contradiction, the reader has to imagine two different models of food processing, one **subtractive**—as illustrated by the removal of husk from grain used to make white bread—and the other **additive**—as illustrated by putting vitamins and minerals into 'enriched bread' (the two models are, of course, related in that certain things get added to processed

food precisely because others have been taken out). Presumably the writer of this editorial set out with the subtractive model in mind, which would, in principle, allow for the adding of certain substances to natural foods. The important point here is that readers, as they work out just what the writer means by natural foods, are forced to abandon an autonomous orientation to text. In effect, they have to draw on real-world knowledge if they are to resolve the apparent contradiction within the passage.

As readers move on to the items, they find a number of contradictions there as well. To begin with, the first item reflects a certain tension between autonomous and pragmatic orientations to text. In order to select the target response, **concerned that people should improve their health**, readers must take a rather banal view of the author's purpose in putting together the editorial. Clearly the editor has a broader agenda in mind. Perhaps natural foods are a central concern of Food Magazine—they may, for example, be an important ingredient in its advertising—and it is thus not surprising that they play such an important role in this bit of exhortation to the magazine's readers. There is, however, no choice provided that picks up on such pragmatic orientation to the editorial, and so the reader is forced to settle for the target response.

The bland treatment of the editor's concerns in item 1 does not tally with the more vivid language in item 2, which forces the reader to acknowledge that the editorial is, in fact, **slanted in favor of natural foods**. Slanted is a rather combative word to be used on a test item, and it is likely to disorient the reader accustomed to the neutral stance that the autonomous orientation entails. A number of readers whom we interviewed admitted that they felt uncomfortable in selecting this target response. They claimed it was only the extreme weakness of the distractors that led them to select it. The distractor (G), however, did have a certain strength for some readers. If they assume—either from faith in the written word or from conviction about the merits of natural foods—every statement in the passage to be true, they are then able to conclude that it stated only facts.

The inconsistency between items 1 and 2 is paralleled by another kind of inconsistency between items 3 and 5, the two that the test makers place under **passage detail (what)**. Both are concerned with recycling local detail from the

second paragraph, a passage which reflects the canonical structure of expository writing. There is an initial topic sentence that speaks of the **numerous advantages of eating natural foods.** It is then followed by material that specifies just what those advantages are. The second sentence maintains the comparative frame initiated by the topic sentence (i.e., **more nutritious** and **more vitamins than processed foods**). The final two sentences, however, dispense with any explicit markers of comparison, though readers who are sensitive to rhetorical structure are likely to maintain them. Such readers are faced with a dilemma in selecting a target response for item 3, for there are two choices—**tastier** and **more healthful**—that draw on the supporting material provided by the second paragraph. Given test makers' autonomous orientation to item construction, readers could, in principle, draw upon Olson's notion of attention to exact wording to support the choice of either. They could claim that since the word **taste** was actually used in the supporting material (**healthful** was not), test makers would give priority to **tastier** in that it recycles the lexical material of the passage in its most exacting form (it is of interest that this item was categorized under **passage detail** in the **Objectives Mastery Summary**). On the other hand, readers could give priority to **more healthful**, since it is the one that parallels the passage material overtly marked for comparison. It is this second strategy that is rewarded by the test makers, who presumably expect the reader not to integrate the final proposition—that natural foods taste good—into the comparative frame of the paragraph. In effect, the test taker must read from the perspective of a given sentence—and its limited surface form—rather than from the perspective of the larger discourse. This strategy is not consistent, however, with what readers must do in responding to item 5. Here they are required to identify **natural foods ... taste good** (the final proposition of the paragraph) as a **reason for eating natural foods**, which is, of course, what the paragraph is all about. In effect, readers must now take the final proposition back to the initial sentence, the very thing they were prevented from doing on item 3.

Before leaving item 5, we should observe that it is a classic illustration of test makers' autonomous approach to item construction. In setting up a target response, they exploit a relatively marginal detail, and ignore information that is

more central to the passage. In this instance, for example, they pass over reasons having to do with nutrition and lack of harmful additives to select one having to do with taste. They then place this textually marginal choice among pragmatically motivated ones that are not actually stated in the text—though a probing reader may find bits of text to justify selecting one of the distractors. For this item, one of the choices the test makers provide is **They are fresher than processed foods**, which was, in fact, chosen by the Italian reader who pointed to certain passage material as providing a rationale for her choice (i.e., **Be sure to buy fresh fruits and vegetables whenever you have the opportunity**).

There is another kind of inconsistency reflected in item 4, one concerned with separating fact from opinion. In this item the target response forms a proposition that does not, strictly speaking, correspond to what the passage states:

> Passage version:
> Natural foods contain few, if any, added chemicals or preservatives.
>
> Item version:
> Natural foods contain few preservatives.

To readers imbued with the autonomous orientation that test discourse demands, this discrepancy might be sufficient for them to feel uneasy about accepting the target response. The passage allows for the possibility of no preservatives at all in natural foods whereas the item requires that there be, at least, some. Experienced test takers can, however, find a clue to the target response in the words **It has been proved** that are used in the passage. Readers are clearly meant to take these words at face value and to avoid the pragmatic assumption that they are used simply to make the assertion sound convincing. Moreover, if readers deal with the other choices as the test makers intend, they will discover that each contains wording that normatively signals a subjective stance (this wording has been placed in bold type):

> Whole-grain flour **is better** than bleached flour.
> You **will feel better** if you eat natural foods.
> You **should** buy fresh fruits and vegetables when you shop.

Again, the experienced test taker can isolate the target response by attending to surface content rather than to the underlying propositional content.

This kind of item, which the test makers classify under **writing form (fact, opinion)**, occurs with a certain frequency on the new TABE, particularly within units based on advertising material. Presumably the test makers wish to assess whether test takers can be critical consumers of advertising, a goal which might be considered worthwhile in a consumer-oriented society like our own. As we examine items based on such material, however, we find that, rather than measuring any real capacity for distinguishing fact from opinion, they simply focus on whether test takers can use wording itself as a kind of litmus paper for making such a distinction.

Let us now turn to advertising material written for the radio, presented as Unit 12 on pages 82-83 in the Appendix. As can be seen, it, too, attempts to sell a product—a kind of candy snack—by presenting it as a natural food. In reading the passage, one can notice how certain choices of language do not accord well with what one might expect in radio advertising (e.g., the use of the word **delicious** by the tennis champion Toni Jackson in her utterance, **"I often snack on a delicious Nutrasnak Cluster just before a match"**). Such stylistic infelicities are important to note, given the test makers' rationale for the use of such material, namely, that it reflects the kind of language that adults are likely to encounter in their everyday experience.

The last of the six items asks readers to identify which of the choices expresses a fact about Nutrasnak Clusters. The target response is **They are individually wrapped**, the only one that does not include subjectively based wording. Using the procedure we followed above, we can place such wording in bold type for each of the distractors:

They taste **delicious**.
They are **good** for you.
They contain the **finest** ingredients.

It might be argued that **good** and **finest** are not intrinsically imbued with subjectivity, but rather are simply used without any specification of objective criteria. In the case of **good**, criteria having to do with nutrition are clearly implied. We suggest, in fact, that if **nutritious** were used in place of **good** (and

for you were deleted), then choice (G) might well be considered a legitimate response. Pragmatically speaking, this revised version would mean much the same thing as the original, but given the way in which lexical resources are evaluated, the revised version could be considered a factual statement. We are again confronted with evidence for the test makers' autonomous orientation: they force readers to distinguish fact from opinion by attending to wording rather than meaning. In dealing with these items, readers must, as it were, sort the lexicon into objective and subjective domains, even though, linguistically speaking, any such neat division is quite misleading.

The other items are all largely involved with autonomous recycling of detail (though the test makers' classification again gives the impression that they require more complex kinds of pragmatic inferencing). The **Objectives Mastery Summary** places the first two items under **interpreting events (conclusion)**, the third under **passage detail (when)**, the fourth under **writing techniques (persuasive techniques)**, and the fifth under **interpreting events (predict outcome)**. Ironically it is the item classified as recycling passage detail that calls for a particularly complex response, for it requires readers to identify which of the choices is **not** mentioned in the passage. Such negative formating forces them to search carefully through the passage to establish that three of the choices are mentioned and that one is not. Readers making this search may be confused, moreover, by the passage assertion that **anytime** is a good time for eating Nutrasnak Clusters, and so be left with the sense that **none of the above** would, in fact, be a legitimate answer.

The test makers' classification of the other items is also misleading. Consider, for example, item 4, which is classified under **writing techniques (persuasive techniques)**. Such a classification leads us to expect that the reader will be forced to make a critical evaluation of the persuasive functions of advertising. In examining what the item actually requires, we discover that it is largely a matching exercise. The reader simply has to align the passage phrase **famous tennis champion** with the phrase **well-known athlete** in the target response. As for item 5, it is classified under **interpreting events (predict outcome)** when it could as easily be placed under **central thought (author purpose)**. No matter

which party in the communication event is focused on, the important point about this item is that it forces readers to make a general statement when, in fact, a specific one is called for. The producers of this radio commercial are not interested in getting people to try a new snack food—they want them to buy Nutrasnak Health Clusters. We again discover evidence that the items, contrary to what one might suppose from the test makers' classification, do not really assess whether adult readers are critical consumers of advertising.

Having examined an advertisement written to be heard on the radio, let us turn to one written to be read in a newspaper. This advertisement is presented as Unit 13 on pages 84-85 in the Appendix. We would again like to call attention to how little the passage resembles anything that one might actually encounter in a newspaper (consider, for example, the odd tone of the sentence **Come slip your hand into a Pederson glove**). Added to the misleading style of the passage is the incorrect information it presents. Tim Pederson is a catcher, and yet what he wears is a **glove** rather than a **mitt**. This glove is used to catch **fly balls**, even though a catcher, who is positioned behind home plate, never gets near the outfield where such balls are hit. Moreover, the name **Red Wings** is associated with hockey rather than baseball. **Cardinals** would have been a more motivated choice, but the test makers—despite their alleged commitment to verisimilitude—obviously decided to avoid it.

According to the test makers' classification, the items for this material closely parallel those of the Nutrasnak unit. In both sets only one item is placed under **passage detail** (even though they can all be viewed as, in some sense, recycling passage material), and in each case it is a negatively formated item (here item 16 requires readers to identify which of the choices is **not** a feature of the glove). The other items, like those based on the Nutrasnak passage, are misleadingly classified under **interpreting events** or **writing techniques**.

In working with these items, the reader is likely to be frustrated, since they do not reflect a consistent orientation to the exaggerated claims of the advertisement. The first one, for example, asks the reader to identify what Tim Pederson meant when he said that his glove would help **you**, the reader of the advertisement, catch **"like a professional."** The target response is **his glove will make**

catching easier, even though many readers whom we interviewed preferred the distractor **you'll be able to catch every fly ball**. Their reasons for selecting this distractor were straightforward. The first paragraph ends with one exaggerated claim—that the advertised glove will help you to hold on to every fly ball; and then the second paragraph immediately starts up with another—that with the glove you'll catch like a professional. The contiguity of these two claims within the passage can be reproduced in the item itself if the reader selects you'll be able to catch every fly ball. In making this choice, readers are thus able to satisfy two different criteria at once: first, they maintain an autonomous orientation to the text by recycling its actual words (this satisfies their test-sense); and, second, they maintain a consistent interpretive stance toward the text by treating its various claims as exaggerated (this satisfies their text-sense).

There is, however, a contrary criterion which, from the test makers' perspective, takes precedence: any figurative language within a test item should be interpreted as literally as possible (Hill and Larsen 1983). Given this principle, the reader is to assume that Tim Pederson, when he said that his glove would help people catch like a professional, did not really think that it would enable them to catch every fly ball (after all, not even a professional does that). Hence it is necessary to choose the more neutral response, which claims only that catching would be easier.*

The pragmatic reader may claim that this neutral orientation unduly flattens Tim Pederson's words, given the powerful context in which they are intended to function. Within the advertisement his words are necessarily imbued with an exaggerated meaning if they are to have the intended effect on the newspaper's readers (these particular words were, after all, deliberately chosen by the individual(s) who prepared the advertisement). It can be further claimed that other items within this unit do, in fact, force the reader to take the advertising language at face value. Consider, for example, item 15, which asks readers to state what the words "remarkable gloves" are used to show. The target response is are worthy

*It is interesting to note that, unlike the three distractors, the target response, presumably in its quest for neutrality, omits any use of you.

of praise, but, of course, readers have no way of knowing whether the gloves are actually worthy of praise—they simply have to accept what the advertising says. Item 17 forces a similar kind of innocent posture, for readers are required to accept that the gloves have many good features.* Hence, if we consider this set of items as a whole, we can observe that readers must adjust their interpretive posture as they move along within it; that is, they are forced to begin with a certain skepticism—altogether appropriate for the material they are reading—which they must later relinquish.

Before leaving this unit, we would like to note that item 14 parallels item 5 on the Nutrasnak unit in that it provides an overly generalized target response: namely, that people were being encouraged simply to **buy a new baseball glove** rather than a **brand new Tim Pederson baseball glove.** It is easy to understand why test makers construct such items—obviously they wish to avoid excessive recycling of exact words—but, at least with advertising material, this kind of item is inappropriate. Advertising copy is written to sell a specific product and any item constructed for it should reflect a commensurate specificity. It might be argued that the real point of this advertisement was to get people, as the opening line puts it, to **come to Johnson's Sporting Goods Store.** But if this point of view is adopted, then the distractor **visit an unusual store** becomes an attractive choice (presumably the word **unusual** was inserted to dampen just such an attraction).

TABE-87: Letters

There is another kind of material included in the TABE-87, which, like advertising, includes frequent use of the pronoun **you**—a formal letter written to make a request or to register a complaint. Such a letter also includes frequent use of the pronoun **I.** As we will see, the **I-you** axis of interpersonal communication can engender certain confusions when readers come to deal with the items, which, for the most part, make use of only third-person reference. Let us first consider a fairly

*The item does introduce phrasing to motivate the naïveté—it begins with the expression **based on the advertisement** and goes on to include the hedge **probably.**

long letter of complaint to a car manufacturer, which is presented as Unit 14 on pages 86-87 in the Appendix.

This single unit includes nine items, representing nearly a quarter of the items in the comprehension component of the TABE.* According to the test makers' classification, only one of these items calls for the recycling of passage detail, i.e., item 26, in which readers have to identify Ms. Carlson as the owner of Quality Motors. The others are classified under a number of different categories according to principles that are not altogether clear. Consider, for example, the last four items which all consist of **why**-initiated questions. Items 27 and 29 are classified under **interpreting events (cause, effect)**, item 28 under **interpreting events (conclusion)**, and item 30 under **central idea (author's purpose)**. As pointed out earlier, the cause-effect category seems to depend upon explicit representation of this relation within the passage itself; and yet here neither of the items classified in this way are based on passage material of this kind.

Added to these confusing classifications is the tension between autonomous and pragmatic orientations to text that we have frequently observed. Consider, for example, item 24 that asks readers to identify what would be a satisfactory solution for Ms. Barker. To the pragmatic reader, there would be only one satisfactory solution for a car, which, after a mere 3,495 miles of use, leaks oil from the engine and shakes when it is driven at 40 miles per hour—and that is, of course, to get rid of it as soon as possible. Such a choice is not provided, and so the reader is forced to accept a rather tame response, **Ms. Barker's car would be repaired**. This response does not fit particularly well with item 22, which forces the reader to characterize Ms. Barker as **determined** (a pragmatic reader might prefer to describe her as **foolish** if she is willing to settle for merely repairing a car that is obviously a **lemon**). We would like to question whether such anodyne test items encourage the critical evaluation of text which, in principle, should be a primary goal in any assessment of adult literacy.

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*The new version does not correct what is a clear defect of the old one: namely, the use of an excessive number of items within a single unit.

Let us now turn to a letter presented as Unit 15 on pages 88-89 in the Appendix. As can be seen, it expresses a request rather than a complaint (though, as is often the case, some form of complaint may be heard in the request). As with the previous unit, the items based on this letter encourage a naive stance toward its content. Consider, for example, item 18 that asks how workers feel about their jobs at Radar Metal Products. A purely autonomous approach to the passage leads clearly to the target response **pleased**, for Sara Hall wrote the words **we like our jobs here**. Such unimaginative recycling of passage detail is hardly warranted, however, when one considers the rhetorical constraints on an employee's letter to the president of the company where she works. To anyone reading between the lines, the choice **disappointed** might be attractive, given that Ms. Hall was forced to initiate the request for a child-care center, even though three local companies had already instituted such centers with great success. Apparently the president herself—again a woman is presented as in charge—had remained impervious to what was going on in the community (one might question whether this woman president appears in the light that the test makers presumably intended).

By the same token, item 21 may be confusing to the pragmatic reader. Given the rhetorical constraints of a formal letter, Ms. Hall may be viewed as presenting discreetly the idea that a child-care center is, in fact, necessary within companies (particularly those that employ women). She writes that Cedar City has very few child-care centers and that many of the workers—presumably women—have young children. The target response to this item is, however, **helpful**, since Ms. Hall writes in her letter that **a child care center would really help us**. The test makers classify this item under **passage detail (what)**, suggesting that they do, in fact, view it as merely recycling passage information. We may thus conclude that both of the above items are insensitive to the rhetorical constraints on the passage material—a letter written to a superior requesting a favor—in which meaning will necessarily be expressed indirectly. Any construction of items that does not take account of such indirection will be misleading to a test taker who is pragmatically oriented to text.

TABE-87: Poetry

We have hitherto examined new material—advertising and formal letters—that has practical functions, but the TABE-87 includes another kind of material whose primary function is aesthetic. On levels M through A, a single poem is included within the reading comprehension component. The choice of such material might be considered somewhat surprising, given the test makers' concern with drawing on material that adult readers are likely to encounter in their everyday lives. From a broad functional perspective, however, poetry may be considered as congruent with advertising and letters, for they all deal with interpersonal meanings rather than purely ideational ones. Moreover, we suspect that the test makers wish to guard against any accusation that their assessment of adult literacy is based on merely practical ends, given the strong movement in the field that literacy skills should be developed among adults for a variety of reasons (including those having to do with imaginative uses of language).

No matter what the test makers' intentions were in including poetry, the kinds of items they construct lead to problems that are perhaps even more severe than those that we have been considering. These problems are very much in evidence in the items that accompany the poem presented as Unit 16 on page 90 in the Appendix. This poem, written by Langston Hughes, first appeared in 1932 in a volume entitled **The Dream Keepers and Other Poems** (the poetry used on the TABE is invariably selected from work published by either a woman or someone who is a member of an ethnic minority).

As is clear at first glance, this is a short unit—the passage consists of two four-line stanzas where each line contains only three to five words (nearly all of which are monosyllabic). The poem is then followed by only three items, the first two dealing with relatively broad interpretations of the poem and the third with an exegesis of its last two lines. In dealing with the first item, a number of readers felt that the poet was referring to dreams that could be characterized as both hopeful—the target response—and forgotten. In justifying their attraction to the latter, they pointed to the second line of the second stanza: **For when dreams go**. Here they claimed that the poet is presenting dreams as actually disappearing, unlike in the first stanza where he speaks only of such a possibility (**for if dreams die**);

and in the larger context of the poem it is natural to interpet the disappearing dreams as **forgotten**, since at the beginning of each stanza the poet, anticipating such forgetting, exhorts his readers to **hold fast to dreams**. Here we can see that poetic discourse, sustaining, as it often does, multiple meanings, is not easily handled within the multiple-choice format that requires one meaning to be chosen over another.

The second item suffers from a similar problem: the target response conveys only the negative aspect of what the poet says: **if you give up your dreams, life becomes empty**. There is, however, a positive aspect as well—that you should **hold fast to your dreams**. Clearly this exhortation is central to the poem since it initiates each of the stanzas. Hence the **main idea** of the poem, if this term is to be used,* would be best represented by a statement consisting of both the positive and the negative aspects. Such a statement would obviously be too long to function as a choice for a multiple-choice item and so the test makers were forced, by the strictures of test form, to reduce it.

The final item requires readers to interpret the figurative language, used by the poet in the final stanza, to represent the empty life of one who, to use the words of the target response, **lets go of dreams**. This item presents little difficulty to readers who are autonomously oriented to text. They simply transform language provided by the poem—**when dreams go**—to represent those whose empty life is represented by the wintry imagery. For pragmatically oriented readers, however, the choice **becomes old and tired** has a certain appeal, for the poet seems to be addressing just this kind of person. It is, after all, the fatiguing weight of accumulated years that often leads adults to let go of their dreams.

In closing this discussion of how poetry is used on the new TABE, we would like to note that most of the items the test makers constructed are parallel to this final one. Altogether 6 poems are used at levels M, D, and A (i.e., 2 at each

*As Hill and Larsen (1983) have pointed out, test makers' extension of the term **main idea** from exposition to narrative can be confusing. Such extension is particularly unwarranted in reference to poetic discourse which is best conceived as embodying multiple themes rather than a single idea. Indeed, those trained in literary criticism are generally reluctant to use the word **idea** to describe what poetry expresses.

level), and they are accompanied by a total of 24 items. Out of the 24, 10 require the reader to provide a literal interpretation for a relatively local use of figurative language (there are, for example, no items that lead the reader to explore thematically sustained imagery). Here again is evidence of the test makers' autonomous orientation to text. Such orientation seems particularly questionable when dealing with the complex kinds of reader response that poetic discourse engenders.

Conclusions

The two versions of the TABE

We have used two contrasting models of literacy—the autonomous and the pragmatic—to examine how the old and the new versions of the TABE assess reading comprehension. Of these versions, the new promises closer adherence to the pragmatic model than does the old. To begin with, the new version uses material which, on the surface, invites a fuller range of reader response. It no longer presents fragments of literate devices, such as a table of contents or an index, from which readers are supposed to extract bits of information. At the same time, it draws on narrative and expository material that is presumed to be of interest to those taking the test, i.e., those enrolled in adult literacy programs. The stories it presents are more relevant than those that were adapted from the CAT for use in the old TABE, for they tell about people looking for work or worrying about health problems rather than about adults engaged in activities ordinarily associated with children. As for the expository passages, they discuss such matters as the problems of being a single parent or of running one's own business, and present a sharp contrast to the encyclopedic kind of passage used earlier (consider the one about **Lepidoptera**). Moreover, the revised version introduces interactionally oriented material—advertising, letters, and poetry—which invites readers to become engaged with the text and thereby construct richer worlds of meaning.

According to the test makers, there has been substantial alteration not only in the passages they have selected, but also in the items they have constructed. In the **Objectives Mastery Summary**, they present a new scheme of item

classification that can be used to produce a diagnostic profile for each individual tested. According to this scheme, the items assess not only readers' ability to handle passage detail but also their capacity to carry out more complex aspects of comprehension such as analyzing character, interpreting events, and analyzing rhetorical techniques. We should note here that the test makers, in constructing this scheme, make two basic assumptions: (1) each item has a single objective, and (2) the objective is to be defined only in relation to the target response.

Our analysis has shown that this classification is quite misleading. The **Objectives Mastery Summary** purports to indicate what the individual reader for whom it is being filled out can do; but an examination of how the items are actually classified shows that the criterion is often not so much what is demanded of the reader as the content of the sentence or two on which the item is based. Thus, when the passage version includes an indicator of causation like the word **because**, the item is likely to be classified as **interpreting events (cause, effect)**. The one about why Calvin Simmons was called the "Maestro Kid" (Unit 9, pages 78-79) is classified in this way, although the task, as we have shown, requires little more than a recycling of passage material. On the other hand, where such an indicator is not in the passage version (and therefore, one would imagine, some interpretation of events is indeed required to identify one proposition as being the cause of another), the item is not put in that category. In the story about Sam Wells, for example, readers are asked to use the passage version to construct the item version:

> Sam Wells went to the doctor with a headache ——————>
> Sam Wells went to the doctor because **he had a headache**

This, according to the **Objectives Mastery Summary**, is an item that indicates mastery only of **passage detail (what)**. In making this classification, they are obviously attending to the surface form of the text rather than to its underlying propositional structure; yet there is substantial evidence that the underlying structure is fundamental to readers' comprehension of text (Sachs 1967, Bransford and Franks 1971, Spiro 1977, 1980, Abbott and Black 1986). We again discover

evidence that the autonomous model, with the attention to exact wording that it entails, leads test makers to misconstrue what their items do.

We would claim that it is impossible to classify any of these items in terms of a single objective mastered; for reading is too complex a process to lend itself to such treatment. Even when we consider only what is involved in determining whether a single response is appropriate or not, there is usually more than one thing for readers to do: to identify a **passage detail**, for instance, they must scan the passage, identify the relevant portion, apply a syntactic transformation to make it match the target response, and perhaps recognize a synonym for an important word or phrase. Still more is involved when we remember that there is not just one response to be considered, but four—and all are, at least initially to the test taker, of equal status. Thus, while accepting the target reponse may be a matter chiefly of one of the processes delineated in the **Objectives Mastery Summary**, rejecting the other choices will necessarily require different processes. An example is provided by another item on the Calvin Simmons passage in which readers are expected to select **imitating opera stars**—classified under **passage detail**—as best displaying **Calvin Simmons' sense of humor**; but to do so they must reject, among other choices, **driving a truck onto the stage**, which, as we have shown, requires a degree of cultural interpretation that might be more appropriately described as **interpreting events**.

Apart from the difficulties with the **Objectives Mastery Summary**, the items themselves present a number of problems. We have commented on the order in which they are presented within each unit: it corresponds neither to the order in which the relevant statements appear in the text nor to the levels of generality of the propositions addressed. In both these respects the test makers have ignored basic processes of reading comprehension, for texts are ordinarily read in the order in which they are presented, and there is substantial evidence that readers, in processing a wide range of texts, depend on global propositions in understanding local ones. (Bransford and Johnson 1972, Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983)

The most serious flaw in the items, however, lies in the configurations of choice they present. One of the most common is an autonomously oriented target response coupled with pragmatically oriented distractors. Consider, for example,

the last item in the unit about natural foods (Unit 11, page 81). The target response forces the reader to ignore the central concerns of the passage and to focus on a marginal detail. Alongside this detail are pragmatically oriented choices that do not, strictly speaking, fit with what the text overtly expresses; they do, however, develop certain portions of the text that seem to be incomplete. Such a configuration can prompt readers to construct a larger discourse in which these pragmatically oriented choices are integrated with the passage itself. This integration reflects a fundamental aspect of the reading process: readers continuously draw on larger bodies of knowledge to understand what they are reading (Bower, Black, and Turner 1979; Seifert, Robertson, and Black 1985); and in their ordinary acts of reading, they do not ordinarily keep such knowledge separate from what the text contains. Indeed, one mark of successful reading is that, as readers use text to build new knowledge structures, the two become indistinguishable. For the purposes of the test, however, readers are required to keep track of what they bring to the text as distinct from what the text actually contains. In other words, they must treat the text as though it were autonomous.

This brings us to the heart of our objection to the new TABE when we compare it with the old. With respect to the earlier version, the passage material and the items, when considered together, constitute autonomously oriented discourse that allows the reader to develop a relatively consistent approach. Such discourse is prototypically embodied in units based on the formal apparatus of literacy (e.g., a table of contents and index). In dealing with such units, readers are required, for any given item, to work with only a limited portion of the text. Moreover, the units based on narrative or expository material consistently reflect this autonomous orientation. The passages themselves are so bland that readers can approach them as mere containers for bits and pieces of information to be recycled in the items. In analyzing these units, we did have occasion to point out infelicities—both within the passages and the items—that can be distracting to adult readers (e.g., the banal material that results from adapting the CAT narratives written for children). Nevertheless, the old TABE, taken as a whole, does reflect a consistently autonomous orientation that allows the reader to handle such

infelicitous material without worrying unduly about the pragmatic confusion it engenders.

By way of contrast, the new TABE presents discourse that is less consistent: the passage material is pragmatically oriented, but the items, contrary to the test makers' claim, tend to include autonomously oriented target responses that may be coupled with pragmatically oriented distractors. We can use the Calvin Simmons unit (Unit 9, pages 78-79) to illustrate two major ways in which the items reflect an autonomous orientation. First, certain items call for a simple recycling of local detail from the passage. Consider, for example, the recycling required by the first item, despite its classification under **interpreting events (cause, effect)**:

> Passage version:
> He [Calvin Simmons] was called the "Maestro Kid" because, by the age of eleven, he was conducting the San Francisco Boys' Chorus.
>
> Item version:
> Calvin Simmons was called the "Maestro Kid" because at age eleven **he conducted a chorus**.

Second, the item that asks readers about the purpose of the passage forces them to view it as an autonomous vehicle for transmitting information:

> The purpose of this passage is to **tell about a talented young man's remarkable success**.

When one considers the final sentence of the passage, it is evident that the real purpose of the passage is to raise money for a scholarship fund established in Calvin Simmons' name:

> Continued help for young talent can be a fitting memorial to Calvin Simmons.

In effect, the text invites the reader to imagine a context in which its purpose goes beyond the purely transactional. The item, however, requires that the invitation be turned down.

We find it helpful to refer to such text-induced context as the **inner context** and to contrast it with what we call the **outer context**—that is, the

communicative situation in which test takers interact with test makers. Central to that situation is the larger discourse—the sequence of passages together with items on each—that the test makers have created; but readers' sense of that context is also formed from all the testing material they have been exposed to throughout their school careers. As we have shown through our examination of the old TABE (and, incidentally, of the CAT), such material strongly reinforces the autonomous model of literacy, as, indeed, does much of the process of western schooling; and in this respect we agree with Olson. For those taking the TABE, however, such school exposure has often been limited, and their sense of test discourse may be so underdeveloped that they will only be confused by the pragmatically oriented material introduced on the new version of the test. For, unsatisfactory as the old TABE is, it does secure a reasonable match between the outer context and the inner: the passages themselves are so neutral that readers are less likely to be distracted from the demands of the testing situation. With the new TABE, however, readers are prone to construct inner contexts that are more discontinuous with the outer one. This is particularly the case with passages that embody advertising and letters, given the strong axis of interpersonal communication they set up. This axis leads readers to construct a context of human interaction that goes beyond what is directly stated, but they must suppress this context when they come to do the tasks. They must, for example, accept an advertisement at face value or examine only the declared motives of a letter writer. In the case of poetry, they are forced to read it much as they might an essay—as embodying a sequence of propositions supporting a main idea, ignoring, all the while, the multiple themes sustained by imagery. We can here observe the hegemony of the assumption we identified as the autonomy of skill: namely, that once individuals have developed the skill of treating text as if it were autonomous, they can readily apply it to any material they encounter.

The new version of the TABE can be quite frustrating to adults who, though they may not be able to read well, have learned to draw on a range of skills in different types of oral interaction. When interpreting a letter, for example, such readers naturally, and quite appropriately, take account of the presumed motives of the writer—just as they take account of their interlocutor's motives when they are involved in oral interaction. The passages used in the new TABE encourage them

to use such orally developed skills; but then the items require that they abandon these skills and adopt what is in many ways a less sophisticated approach. This dissonance between passage and items may account for the reluctance of those who work in adult literacy programs to adopt this version of the test. Certainly in metropolitan New York there is widespread resistance to shifting from the old version to the new. As one experienced teacher put it, "The material gets people really reading and then the questions just pull the rug out from under them."

Suggestions for improving the TABE

Given the problems created by the test makers' revisions, the question naturally arises as to whether they can be resolved. We have strong doubts, as will become evident, about any ultimate solution—the TABE-87 is a poignant reminder of just how difficult it is to revise a test. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that, with the insistence of the larger society on accountability, the demand for general instruments for assessing literacy will continue; and so, as a short-term expedient, we here make recommendations as to how a test like the TABE could be improved.

The restructuring that we recommend is based on the most fundamental principle of any genuinely reliable reading assessment: namely, that there be an appropriate fit between the material readers work with and what they do to demonstrate comprehension. The reading comprehension component of the test should therefore be divided into two sections—one based on autonomously oriented material and the other on pragmatically oriented material. Within each section the items constructed would, as much as possible, reflect an appropriate orientation to the text presented. In the autonomously oriented section, all the choices for a given item would focus on readers' ability to locate details within the passage—the items would, in principle, deal with more central details rather than peripheral ones. In the pragmatically oriented section, the items would focus on readers' capacity to make appropriate inferences from the textual material—the items would, in principle, deal only with a normative set of text-induced inferences. In a test constructed along these lines readers would not be forced to make metacognitive decisions about which kind of orientation to adopt for a given item.

As we have frequently shown, such decision-making can become an end in itself, leading readers away from what they actually do when comprehending a text.

Assuming that the restructuring can take place, what, then, would be the material selected for the two sections of the test? For the autonomously oriented section, the test makers could legitimately restore some of the material used in the old TABE. They could, for example, include literate devices such as a table of contents or an index; and the accompanying items should require test takers to recycle bits of information (the recycling should, however, parallel more closely what readers actually do when using material of this kind). Similarly, encyclopedic material, like the passage about the Lepidoptera species, could be accompanied by a set of items that deal with passage detail—though, again, we would suggest some modification in that a set should reflect, as much as possible, both the intrinsic order of textual propositions and their level of generality.

There are other kinds of text that could be placed in the autonomously oriented section, for it is not only in the relatively academic activity of finding information in books that attention to exact wording is important. John Black (1988), in the first publication of this series, suggests that tests of adult literacy should include material dealing with, to use his phrasing, "how things work and how to do things." Such material could be drawn from the textual worlds that adults encounter in their everyday lives: for example, a pamphlet on how to get a passport or a manufacturer's manual on how to assemble a bicycle. Clearly this kind of material, which must be read closely, has considerable functional importance for people who take the TABE, but as Black rightly points out, it is noticeably absent from adult literacy tests.*

In the pragmatically oriented section, the test makers could include the kind of material—advertising, letters, and poetry—that is characteristic of the new TABE; or, given the fact that poetry calls for an interpretive mode different from that used in reading letters or advertisements, there could be an even further

*This material would naturally include graphics such as pictures, diagrams, and tables. Such expansion of the textual repertoire is appropriate in the assessment of adult literacy since it is often important that readers be able to use illustrative material in the interpretation of text.

division. One subsection could address readers' imaginative powers and so include literary material like fiction and poetry; the other could appeal more to readers' common sense, and be comprised of material like advertisements, business letters, news articles, and political pamphlets. A division along these lines would, in principle, allow for a more refined kind of assessment. Adults with a strong practical bent, for example, would not have their ability to use text in everyday life obscured by the fact that they have little idea of how to read poetry. Similarly, recently arrived immigrants who have been formally educated in their own countries might do poorly on the more topical material because of their lack of appropriate knowledge; they could, however, demonstrate their ability to make appropriate inferences when reading a literary text. To our way of thinking, these pragmatically oriented sections, if properly constructed, will eventually be more important than the autonomously oriented ones, for we maintain, contrary to Olson, that meaning is not "in the text" but in the pragmatic context that the reader constructs from it.

There are obvious difficulties in constructing appropriate items for pragmatically oriented material, since readers quite legitimately disagree about what kinds of inferences to make about a given text. There are a number of factors, many associated with cultural knowledge, that can affect a reader's understanding of text. Nevertheless, certain patterns of pragmatic response may be considered normative for particular kinds of text, and one of the test makers' major goals would be to determine whether readers can recognize different kinds of text and adapt their pragmatic approach accordingly. This could be done, using the unit about natural foods (Unit 11, page 81), by asking readers to distinguish textual features that identify it as an editorial from those that make it seem like an advertisement. Similarly, on the Nutrasnak unit (Unit 12, pages 82-83), readers could be asked to identify any statement that is probably not true—and then to say why. In the passage about Calvin Simmons (Unit 9, pages 78-79), readers could be asked, as, in fact, they are in item 29, about the purpose of the passage and be provided a series of choices for the answer; but they should also be asked to indicate passage material that justifies their choice—and for the purposes of assessment, the configuration of choice and sentence would be considered rather than the choice alone. Again, in the letter about the child-care center (Unit 15,

pages 88-89), it is appropriate to ask how workers feel about their jobs, but readers should be given an opportunity to justify their interpretations so that legitimate variation can be recognized.

The traditional multiple-choice format is obviously inadequate for this kind of testing, and so, in following our recommendations, test makers would have to rethink how they elicit reader response. This is not the place to examine such possibilities in detail, but we would like to suggest that items dealing with pragmatic comprehension may be most satisfactorily presented by means of computer-mediated branching networks in which what a reader selects at a given point influences what is subsequently presented. The options offered at each stage would be designed to reflect readers' interpretive processes—and, of course, there should always be the opportunity to start over. It would thus be possible to obtain a complete record of what different readers do—not only of the final response they arrive at, but also of the route, including the wrong turnings, they take to get there. We should caution, however, against allowing testing of this kind to become exclusively dependent on computer technology. Computers are not always available, for one thing, and, for another, many people are still in considerable awe of them: for such people it would clearly be unfair to make the means of demonstrating print literacy contingent upon computer literacy. On the other hand, computer literacy is becoming so important that it will soon require assessment in its own right.

The most basic problem in constructing items along the lines we have suggested is to devise options that reflect the legitimate range of pragmatic interpretations that readers actually make. The solution to this problem can come only from an appropriate use of ethnographic techniques that elicit how representative members of the target population interpret selected texts (Parry 1986). These interpretations should then be used to construct the branching networks of tasks, the ecological validity of which would, in turn, be further evaluated by eliciting reader response. Only after this second stage of ethnographic work would the unit be ready for psychometric validation of the traditional kind. We acknowledge that such a procedure is cumbersome, but we believe it to be essential if reading tests are really to assess how well individuals can function in a complex

society that uses many different kinds of text to achieve a wide variety of sociocultural goals.

An alternative approach to assessment

As we have said, however, problems like those manifest in the TABE-87 cannot be easily resolved. Certainly it has not been the only test to run into difficulties as a result of introducing pragmatically oriented material. Over the past decade there has been a general movement toward "communicative testing," and the resulting instruments, at least those we have examined, share, to varying degrees, the problem of dissonance between the material selected and the items constructed.* There is also the practical problem of constructing a wide-ranging test that can fit into a reasonable time frame: a test that covers adequately the different orientations to text might simply be too massive and therefore discouraging for readers. This problem is particularly acute in the field of adult literacy, where acculturation to testing is much less developed than in the formal schooling system (John Garvey, in a report that follows in this series, points out how difficult it is to administer the TABE, even as it is presently constructed, in adult literacy programs in New York City). It may well be impossible to assess the reading comprehension of adults by means of a single instrument; and thus, in the long term, a more radical reform may be needed, one that dispenses with the notion of an externally constructed test of general literacy or, at least, views it only as one component within a broader approach to assessment.

Our main consideration in supporting such reform is the deleterious effects that standardized testing has on instruction. The obligation to prepare students for a test like the TABE leads teachers, who are rightly concerned with their students' welfare, to focus unduly on an autonomous orientation to text. But even a test that

*Fillmore and Kay (1983) claim that the psychometric model of test validation itself leads to such dissonance. In order for a test unit to discriminate sufficiently between members of a large population, it must be so constructed that a substantial proportion of those taking it will not select the target responses; and this, they claim, necessarily contributes to creating ill-formed discourse.

includes more pragmatically oriented units will still suffer from many of the problems found in the TABE—simply because it is constructed for a diverse population by test makers who do not know the individuals to be assessed nor the curricula they have followed. Consider again, for example, the distinction that we made on pages 53-54 between the outer context of a particular test unit—the testing situation—and the inner context—the pragmatic context that the reader has to construct in order to make sense of the passage. Dividing the test up into autonomously and pragmatically oriented sections would reduce the dissonance between these contexts; but this dissonance could not be removed entirely, since a test intended for a large and diverse population must still provide a number of short units on a variety of topics. Thus readers would have to move rapidly from one inner context to another, and, because of the demands of the outer context, resist the temptation to become overly involved in any one of them. So practice in doing tests—and we cannot expect teachers not to provide it—would then, as now, teach readers to take in information for the short-term purpose of responding to tasks and to make little or no attempt to integrate that information with what they already know.

Furthermore, an externally constructed test, even with such pragmatically oriented items as we have suggested, is still likely to inhibit both teachers and students from concentrating on what, according to current thinking, reading instruction should set out to achieve. Let us consider, for example, the model developed by Benjamin Bloom (1984), in which he discusses three major kinds of comprehension—**literal, interpretive,** and **evaluative.** The literal can be identified with what we have called an autonomous orientation to text, while the interpretive can be equated with pragmatic orientation. As for the evaluative, it is conceived as going beyond text-based inferences to consideration of the relevance of a particular text to readers' own beliefs, interests, and problems. We might subsume it under our own pragmatic orientation, or we might distinguish it by another parallel term—say, an **experiential** orientation to text. Literal comprehension—to use Bloom's term—is important in that it provides a necessary basis for comprehension of the interpretive kind; similarly, interpretive comprehension is the foundation of reasoned evaluation; but most teachers—and probably

students, when unaffected by the desire to pass a test—would agree that evaluative comprehension is the most important in terms of the control it can give readers over their own lives within a literate society. Neither interpretive nor evaluative comprehension, however, is adequately dealt with by existing methods of assessment, with the consequence that they are given short shrift in any program where standardized tests play a dominant role. With the new kind of test we have proposed, interpretive comprehension would be given more attention, and this should have a desirable effect on instruction; but evaluative comprehension is so dependent on the values and interests of individuals—and of the local community in which they live and work—that we do not think it can ever be satisfactorily assessed by an externally produced instrument. What is needed is a broader model of assessment, one which, however it uses an external instrument, draws on the internal resources of particular programs and is thus more responsive to local needs.

Within such a model, reading assessment would be treated as a social activity—the reader would be given someone to talk to, so that assessment takes the form of conversation about text (Johnston 1984). This text might be provided by an externally devised test of the kind that we have described, but in an interview it would be possible to select units according to what seemed appropriate for the reader: if material from one domain elicited little response, the interviewer could simply abandon it and move on to another. Such a method would be helpful not only for placement purposes but also for continuous assessment of students' progress throughout a course. It would thus be possible to secure a closer fit between the material used for assessment and that used for instruction. Thomas Sticht (1985) has shown that students in job-related literacy programs perform significantly better on tests that use material from the work domain than they do on more general ones. Clearly tests of such specificity would be easier to administer through interviewers who are also instructors and familiar with the work in question. The most important advantage of such a model, however, is that a suitably trained interviewer would be able to investigate different kinds of reader response—the interpretive and the experiential as well as the literal—and readers,

for their part, would have more opportunity to show how they, in interpreting text, can draw on the range of skills they have developed in oral interaction.

Obviously a great deal of work needs to be done if such an integrated model of assessment and instruction is to be properly developed and disseminated. But a beginning has been made. In Britain the Adult Literacy Resource Agency has published **An approach to functional literacy** (1981), delineating an ethnographically oriented approach to assessment and instruction that is being used in a number of adult literacy centers (Street discusses this approach in a forthcoming article in this series). At the Center for Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania, Susan Lytle and colleagues have developed the use of an extended interview, conducted when adults first enter a program, to ascertain both what they can already do and what they want to achieve; the findings of this interview are then used as a guide in planning instruction (Lytle, Marmor, and Penner 1986). At the Learning Center attached to the Adult Literacy Program of the Ottawa Board of Education, a set of functional skills has been developed as a basis for assessment and instruction. To determine whether individuals possess these skills, teachers conduct interviews using material from an external instrument—the adult literacy modules developed by Stan Jones at the University of Carleton (Patrick Cummins, personal communication). There are obvious benefits that accrue from these functional approaches, though there are problems as well. Perhaps the most intractable is how to provide sufficient standardization so that the needs of a large and potentially mobile population can be provided for. If students are to be able to transfer between programs or to use their literacy training to get jobs, instructors and employers need some means of evaluating the assessment given. It is also important that such assessment be sufficiently rigorous to inspire the confidence of public officials who are responsible for evaluating and funding adult literacy programs. These are difficult issues, and not much has been published to date about how to address them; but we believe they represent the direction that research and practice in reading assessment should take.

In conclusion, we maintain that the autonomous model of literacy—in both of the aspects we have delineated—does not provide an adequate base for assessing reading comprehension. Text itself is never autonomous: indeed, the more writers

attempt to make it fully explicit, the more likely they are to force readers to establish a pragmatic context of ever greater density. Moreover, the skill of literacy is not autonomous either: what is involved in reading depends not only, as Street (1984) points out, on the sociocultural context in which text is used, but also on the characteristics of the particular text in question—or, as Black (1988) puts it, different kinds of text call for different modes of internal representation and processing. Indeed, whether we work from the point of view of an anthropologist like Street or of a cognitive scientist like Black, we think it is more helpful to conceive of multiple literacies rather than of a single unitary phenomenon; and the task of those who are concerned with reading assessment and instruction is to determine whether readers have the appropriate literacy for the particular texts that they will have occasion to use and for the particular circumstances in which they are likely to use them.

APPENDIX

UNIT 1

TABE 1976, Level E, Form 4

▶ Read the table of contents. Do Items 6–8. Fill in the space that has the same number as the answer you choose.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. Bones of the Body	1
2. The Heart	7
3. Skin	15
4. The Brain	31
5. Eyes and Ears	45

6 Page 9 tells about

- ③ bones
- ⑤ eyes and ears
- ⑦ the brain
- ⑧ the heart

7 Information about skin is found on pages

- ① 7 through 14
- ② 15 through 30
- ④ 15 through 31
- ⑥ 31 through 44

8 Information about eyes and ears begins on page

- ⑤ 17
- ⑥ 31
- ⑦ 45
- ⑧ 46

▶ Use the index to do items 9 and 10. Fill in the space that has the same number as the answer you choose.

INDEX

Resources of the community, 132-139.
You and the community: helping your community, 118-121; other workers in a community, 112-115; planning in a community, 97-104; working in a community, 106-110.

9 Information about other workers in a community starts on page

① 110
② 112
③ 116
④ 132

10 Page 108 tells about

⑤ helping a community
⑥ other workers in a community
⑦ planning in a community
⑧ working in a community

MRS. BOWEN'S ACTING CLASS

PARTS	CASTS			
	Cast 1	Cast 2	Cast 3	Cast 4
Emil	Roy	Stanley	Carlos	Karim
Renee	Barbara	Janet	Maria	Elaine
Geraldine	Chris	Carolyn	Kelly	Bonnie

Mrs. Bowen's acting class is planning to put on a play. The characters in the play are named Emil, Renee, and Geraldine. The students in the class are reading through the play in groups called *casts*. The members of each cast and the parts they are reading are listed above.

Members of the same cast are called *mates*. Therefore, the mates of Janet are Stanley and Carolyn. A way to say this in symbols is:

M(Janet) = [Stanley, Carolyn]

This expression reads: The mates of Janet are Stanley and Carolyn.

Students who are reading the same part are called *companions*. For example, Roy, Stanley, Carlos, and Karim are all reading the part of Emil. Therefore, Roy's companions are Stanley, Carlos, and Karim. This can be expressed in symbols as:

C(Roy) = [Stanley, Carlos, Karim]

This expression reads: The companions of Roy are Stanley, Carlos, and Karim.

35 Which cast is Maria's?

[1] Cast 1
[2] Cast 2
[3] Cast 3
[4] Cast 4
[5] none of these

36 Kelly is reading the part of

[6] Bonnie
[7] Chris
[8] Emil
[9] Geraldine
[0] none of these

37 Roy and Stanley are

[1] brothers
[2] companions
[3] cousins
[4] mates
[5] none of these

38 Which one of the following is <u>not</u> a student in Mrs. Bowen's class?

[6] Barbara
[7] Renee
[8] Roy
[9] Stanley
[0] none of these

39 How many companions does Kelly have?

[1] 1
[2] 2
[3] 3
[4] 11
[5] none of these

40 Which of the following is a companion of Carlos?

[6] Carolyn
[7] Chris
[8] Elaine
[9] Maria
[0] none of these

41 Which of the following is a mate of Bonnie?

[1] Carolyn
[2] Karim
[3] Kelly
[4] Maria
[5] none of these

42 M(Barbara) =

[6] [Chris, Roy]
[7] [Janet, Maria, Elaine]
[8] [Renee]
[9] [Stanley, Janet, Carolyn]
[0] none of these

UNIT 4

TABE 1976, Level E, Form 3

The men in Mr. Smith's office decided to build a model boat. Sam brought some tools from home. Joe brought some wood. Pete brought some string. Mike brought some pictures.

The men decided they would need some glue. To make the glue they needed glue powder and water. Joe brought a pan in which to mix them.

14 What did Mike bring?

⑤ a pan

⑥ glue

⑦ pictures

⑧ wood

15 The men were

① busy

② joking

③ lazy

④ tired

16 Who brought more than one thing?

④ Joe

⑤ Mr. Smith

⑦ Pete

④ Sam

17 Which of the following sentences finishes the story correctly?

① The men decided that glue would not work.

② The men decided to buy the glue.

③ The men decided to make their own glue.

④ The men decided to use nails instead.

The big store looked very far away. Al wondered if he would get there in time. It was very hot and crowded on the sidewalks. He had to squeeze between the people as he walked. At last he came to the big glass doors. The doors swung open and he was soon inside the cool building. He rushed down the stairs to the shoe department. Right in front of him were the black shoes that he had come to buy.

18 Al was in

① a big city
⑤ a small village
⑦ the country
⑨ the mountains

19 Al went to the store to buy

① clothes
③ groceries
⑤ shoes
⑦ toys

20 Al was in a hurry to get to the store because he was

③ excited
⑤ hungry
⑦ late
⑨ tired

21 On the sidewalks it was

① cold
③ hot
⑤ wet
⑦ windy

22 Al saw lots of

③ horses
⑤ people
⑦ trains
⑨ trees

23 The store had big doors made of

① glass
③ metal
⑤ wire
⑦ wood

24 Al went to the department that sold

① books
④ shoes
⑦ tools
⑨ toys

25 The inside of the building was

① cool
② damp
③ dark
④ hot

26 To get to the right department, Al used the

② elevator
⑤ escalator
⑦ sidewalk
⑧ stairs

27 The things that Al bought were

① bent
② black
③ broken
④ shiny

Most elephants we see come from the jungles of Asia or Africa. They are the strongest and largest of all land animals. Some weigh six tons and stand ten feet tall. At birth the baby weighs around 200 pounds and is three feet tall. Elephants live about 50 years.

An elephant's head is very big, and his trunk is long. Some have large ivory tusks which are the heaviest and longest teeth of any animal. He has small eyes and large fanlike ears. His eyesight and hearing are poor, but his sense of smell is sharp.

In a zoo an elephant will eat about 500 pounds of hay a day and will drink almost 60 gallons of water. He drinks by sucking water into his trunk and squirting it into his mouth.

Elephants can easily be taught to obey commands and are most often used for heavy work.

38 Most elephants live in

- ⑤ deserts
- ⑥ jungles
- ⑦ mountains
- ⑧ oceans

39 People often use elephants for

- ① food
- ② pets
- ③ water
- ④ work

40 Of all land animals, the elephant is the

- ⑤ fastest
- ⑥ oldest
- ⑦ slowest
- ⑧ strongest

41 At birth a baby elephant weighs about

- ① eighty-five pounds
- ② one hundred pounds
- ③ two hundred pounds
- ④ three hundred pounds

42 Elephants have an especially good sense of

③ hearing
④ sight
⑦ smell
⑧ taste

43 An elephant's largest teeth are called

① fangs
② sabers
③ trunks
④ tusks

44 Elephants can be easily

④ captured
⑤ carried
⑦ frightened
⑧ trained

45 Which of these is the best title for the story?

① "A Day at the Zoo"
② "Jungle Beasts"
③ "The Elephant"
⑤ "Wild Animals"

Scientifically, butterflies and moths are grouped under the heading *Lepidoptera*, a term meaning "scale-winged." These insects have four broad wings covered with small, often brightly-colored scales.

Although they are grouped together, butterflies and moths are different in many ways. Butterflies usually fly during the day, while most moths do their flying at night. A butterfly has wiry antennae with knobs on the end. A moth, on the other hand, has feathery feelers. Butterflies usually molt into a chrysalis stage but do not spin cocoons. Moths, however, generally spin cocoons.

One member of *Lepidoptera*, the monarch butterfly, has reddish-brown wings with black veins and borders. It is famous for its migratory habit, traveling in the summer to places where milkweed grows. As winter approaches, the monarch must move to a warmer climate or die. It spends the winter, therefore, in coastal California, Florida, Texas, Mexico, and other places with a suitable climate.

During these migrations, many monarch butterflies swarm and cover groves of trees on the Monterey Peninsula in California. Every year they arrive in November, alight on the tall pines and cypresses, then leave around the middle of March.

The monarch may cause illness to an enemy that eats it. Animals, however, have learned to avoid it since the bright colors of the monarch are easily recognized. It is supposed that the viceroy butterfly is also avoided because its markings and coloring closely parallel the monarch's.

The monarch lays its eggs singly on the undersides of milkweed leaves. In three to five days each egg hatches — not into a beautiful butterfly, but into a caterpillar. During the caterpillar stage, it seems to do nothing but eat, grow, and molt. The new caterpillar gorges itself on the milkweed leaves, a behavior that has caused the monarch to be called the "milkweed butterfly." The caterpillar then splits its skin, or molts, four times. It attaches itself, head downward, on a thick, silken pad which it has spun on the lower surface of a leaf.

Next it splits its skin again, becoming a jade-green, transparent chrysalis, which hangs on the leaf for ten days to two weeks while it develops into an adult butterfly. The butterfly emerges and clings to the shell of the chrysalis for a brief period until its wings straighten out and harden. Then the adult butterfly is ready to fly. No longer interested in the milkweed leaf for food, the monarch flits from flower to flower searching for nectar.

25 Scientifically, butterflies are called

1. caterpillars
2. *Lepidoptera*
3. monarchs
4. moths

26 Animals avoid the monarch butterfly because it

1. can cause illness
2. eats milkweed
3. looks like the viceroy
4. spins cocoons

27 *Lepidoptera* have four wings which are covered with

1. feathers
2. fur
3. fuzz
4. scales

28 The main purpose of the first two paragraphs is to

1. compare butterflies and moths
2. describe the habits of butterflies
3. explain how butterflies spin cocoons
4. emphasize the difference in moth and butterfly feelers

29 The total time required for a monarch chrysalis to become a butterfly is

1. five to seven days
2. one year
3. ten days to two weeks
4. three months

30 The antennae of butterflies are

6. feathery
7. scaly
8. transparent
9. wiry

31 The last paragraph discusses the change from the

1. butterfly to the moth
2. summer to the winter home
3. chrysalis to the adult butterfly
4. cocoon to the caterpillar

32 The main food of the adult monarch butterfly is

5. moths
6. nectar
7. pine needles
8. viceroys

33 When they migrate, monarch butterflies often travel

1. great distances
2. in January
3. at night
4. with moths

34 All moths and butterflies are alike in that they

5. fly at night
6. have scaly wings
7. have wiry antennae
8. spin cocoons

UNIT 8
TABE 1987, Level E, Form 5

Sam Wells sat in the living room thinking about what the doctor told him. Last week he had gone to the doctor with painful headaches. It frightened him.

The doctor took some tests and showed him the results. Sam had high blood pressure. The doctor said Sam could help lower his blood pressure by taking medicine daily and following a low-salt diet. She also said that Sam needed to lose weight and start getting regular exercise. A good way to start was to walk at least fifteen minutes a day.

The exercise part sounded easy, Sam thought. Sticking to a low-salt diet would be the hard part. But, by following this plan Sam would soon feel like doing all the things his family wanted him to do, like camping and fishing. It was going to be a good summer after all.

31 What is this story mostly about?

A a man with a health problem

B a man with a family problem

C a doctor who was overweight

D a family who camped together

32 Who suggested that Sam lose weight?

F his wife

G his boss

H his doctor

J his children

33 What did Sam think would be hard for him to do?

A exercise daily

B follow a special diet

C camp with the family

D take his medicine daily

34 Sam went to the doctor because he

F wanted to lose weight

G was having headaches

H could not sleep at night

J wanted a regular checkup

UNIT 9

TABE 1987, Level D, Form 5

Calvin Simmons once said that, outside of a very serious moment when he wanted to be a truck driver, he had never deserted his devotion to music. And, in his brief thirty-two years of life, he exposed as many people as he could to the beauty of classical music.

When Simmons was a baby he sat on his aunt's lap in church and, with a small stick, pretended that he was leading the choir. When he was a young boy he sneaked into the San Francisco Opera House and hid in the wings to listen to the music. He was called the "Maestro Kid" because, by the age of eleven, he was conducting the San Francisco Boys' Chorus. He was a clever imitator and, to break some of the monotony of rehearsals, entertained the chorus by dressing in elaborate costumes and pretending to be famous opera stars.

He studied piano in high school and was invited to play a piano solo with the Cleveland Orchestra. While performing in this concert, he decided that being a pianist was not the best way for him to express himself. He began to study conducting and, at the age of twenty-eight, was conductor of the Oakland Symphony.

Simmons loved music and this love came through in his conducting. Orchestras responded enthusiastically to his dramatic movements, and this enthusiasm was mirrored in the applause from the audiences.

Simmons liked to present exciting musical programs. He included music he knew the audiences enjoyed and also works which were unfamiliar to them. He kept classical music fresh, not treating it as something out of a museum. He also searched for new opera music so there could be an exchange of ideas between the composers and performers.

Simmons's interests covered the whole realm of music. As a young artist himself, he encouraged the achievement of other young musicians. Continued help for young talent can be a fitting memorial to Calvin Simmons.

24 According to the passage, which of the following best displays Calvin Simmons's sense of humor?

F playing piano solos

G imitating opera stars

H hiding in the opera house

J driving a truck onto the stage

25 Calvin Simmons was called the "Maestro Kid" because at age eleven he

A conducted a chorus

B led the church choir

C lived in the opera house

D was an accomplished imitator

26 Why did Calvin Simmons include unfamiliar music in his programs?

F He didn't always have the musical score memorized.

G He wanted to present exciting combinations.

H He wanted to please the opera stars.

J He didn't want familiar music to be put in museums.

27 What in the passage indicates that Calvin Simmons had an open mind?

A He obtained enthusiastic responses.

B He longed for an exchange of ideas.

C He had very serious moments.

D He went to church with his aunt.

28 According to the passage, Calvin Simmons could be described as

F timid

G solemn

H dedicated

J old-fashioned

29 The purpose of this passage is to

A encourage people to take music appreciation courses

B show young people how to become symphony conductors

C tell about a talented young man's remarkable success

D inspire the reader to attend classical concerts

30 When did Calvin Simmons play piano with the Cleveland Orchestra?

F during high school

G at age twenty-eight

H before he conducted the boys' chorus

J after he conducted the Oakland Symphony

UNIT 10

TABE 1987, Level E, Form 6

Many people are single parents. They sometimes find that it is not easy. Single parents have to be both "mother" and "father" and usually have to work, too.

One of the hardest parts of single parenting is making sure that everything gets done. On weekends there may be laundry, grocery shopping, and Little League. Perhaps a costume needs to be made for a play. There always seem to be things to do.

Some single parents join support groups. These groups help because the parents can meet others who share their problems. The groups make single parenting a bit easier. Single parents have many demands on their time and emotions. But the rewards of raising children can help balance the hardships.

22 The author of the passage probably wants the reader to

F avoid becoming a single parent

G learn why single parents aren't married

H know how children feel about single parents

J understand more about single parents

23 According to the passage, it is often very hard for a single parent to

A keep a good job

B find a support group

C talk about personal problems

D take care of everything that needs to be done

24 According to the passage, single parenting

F has rewards

G is necessary

H has few demands

J is a popular choice

25 According to the passage, which of the following is usually a goal of single-parent groups?

A offering medical care

B providing emotional support

C arranging day care for children

D organizing a Little League team

UNIT 11

TABE 1987, Level A, Form 5

The following is an editorial written by the editor of *Food Magazine*. Use it to do Numbers 1 through 5.

> People are finally becoming concerned about the decline of their physical and emotional health. Today many people realize that by increasing their consumption of natural foods, rather than processed foods, they will feel better.
>
> Leading dietitians have advocated eating the "natural way" for years and continue to emphasize the numerous advantages of eating natural foods. Natural foods are far more nutritious and contain many more vitamins than processed foods. It has been proved that natural foods contain few, if any, added chemicals or preservatives. Natural foods are not only good for you, but taste good too.
>
> The next time you shop, buy bread made of whole-grain flour rather than bleached flour, or buy honey to use as a sweetener rather than sugar. Be sure to buy fresh fruits and vegetables whenever you have the opportunity.
>
> Take care of yourself and start eating the "natural way" today.

1 The writer of the editorial is

- A critical of shoppers
- B indignant at reports from dietitians
- C concerned that people should improve their health
- D convinced that most people will switch to natural foods

2 Which of the following is true about this editorial?

- F It is slanted in favor of natural foods.
- G It states only facts about natural foods.
- H It is a fair presentation of arguments for and against natural foods.
- J It presents inconsistent information about the benefits of natural foods.

3 In comparison with other foods, the writer believes that natural foods are

- A tastier
- B cheaper
- C more healthful
- D better preserved

4 Which one of the following is a fact stated in this editorial?

- F Natural foods contain few preservatives.
- G Whole-grain flour is better than bleached flour.
- H You will feel better if you eat natural foods.
- J You should buy fresh fruits and vegetables when you shop.

5 Which of these does the writer say is a reason for eating natural foods?

- A They taste good.
- B They are easy to prepare.
- C They are readily available.
- D They are fresher than processed foods.

UNIT 12
TABE 1987, Level D, Form 5

The following is the text of a radio commercial. Use it to do Numbers 1 through 6.

If you are like many other people, you love to snack. You probably also want to eliminate unhealthy foods from your diet. The people at NutraZim, Inc. have developed a delicious snack food that is *good for you*—Nutrasnak Health Clusters.

Nutrasnak Clusters are made of fine natural ingredients. Almonds, honey, sunflower seeds, and sesame seeds are mixed with safflower oil, wheat germ, and vanilla. The result is crunchy, bite-sized morsels of energy. Each cluster is individually wrapped for your convenience. Carry a few in your pocket or purse. They're an energy boost when you need it—snacktime, lunchtime, anytime.

Famous tennis champion Toni Jackson says, "I often snack on a delicious Nutrasnak Cluster just before a match. I'm sure it gives me the boost I need to play my best. And each cluster has only about forty calories."

When you need a snack, think health and energy—think Nutrasnak Cluster!

1 The commercial promotes Nutrasnak Clusters by pointing out the

A cost of each cluster

B amount of money spent to develop the clusters

C ingredients of the clusters

D various flavors of the clusters

2 According to the commercial, people who eat Nutrasnak Clusters

F gain energy

G catch fewer colds

H have fewer cavities

J become champion athletes

3 Which of the following is *not* mentioned in the commercial as a good time to eat a Nutrasnak Cluster?

A at snacktime

B at lunchtime

C before going to bed

D before a tennis match

4 Why is the statement by Toni Jackson included in this commercial?

F She appears in many TV ads.

G She is a famous health-food expert.

H She is a well-known athlete.

J She owns the NutraZim company.

5 What does the writer of this commercial want the reader to do?

A try a new snack food

B stop eating between meals

C try to cook healthier foods

D work for the NutraZim company

6 Which of the following is a *fact* about Nutrasnak Clusters?

F They taste delicious.

G They are good for you.

H They contain the finest ingredients.

J They are individually wrapped.

UNIT 13

TABE 1987, Level E, Form 5

The following is a newspaper advertisement. Use it to do Numbers 13 through 17.

> THE BRAND NEW TIM PEDERSON BASEBALL GLOVES ARE IN!
>
> Come to Johnson's Sporting Goods Store and see these remarkable gloves! Each glove is made of soft, genuine leather, with strong stitching, padded fingers, and a pocket shaped to help you hold on to every fly ball.
>
> "With my glove you'll catch like a professional!" says Tim Pederson, the Red Wings' most famous catcher.
>
> Come slip your hand into a Pederson glove. We're sure you'll agree with Tim!

13 When Tim Pederson says that his glove will help you catch "like a professional," he means that

- A his glove will make catching easier
- B you'll be able to catch every fly ball
- C you'll become a famous catcher
- D his glove will make you a professional baseball player

14 The advertisement encourages people to

- F join a baseball team
- G visit an unusual store
- H buy a new baseball glove
- J shake hands with Tim Pederson

15 The words "remarkable gloves" are used to show that the gloves

A are magical

B are worthy of praise

C can be used for boxing

D will keep your hands warm

16 Which of the following is *not* a feature of the glove?

F wool lining

G soft leather

H sturdy stitching

J cushioned fingers

17 Based on the advertisement, it would probably be correct to say that

A Mr. Johnson plays baseball

B the new glove has many good features

C Tim Pederson is selling his only glove

D the local baseball team will win every game this year

The following is a letter. Use it to do Numbers 22 through 30.

1401 Willow Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37217
October 10, 1986

Mr. Harold Adams
Customer Services Department
Condor Automotive, Inc.
1750 Washburn Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48232

Dear Mr. Adams,

I bought a new Condor X–40 in Nashville, on April 2, 1986. It's the two-door sports model. Ms. Alene Carlson, owner of Quality Motors, sold it to me. My car has a twelve month or 18,000 mile warranty. The car has been driven only 3,495 miles, but already I've had the following problems with it:

1. The car shakes at forty miles per hour.
2. Oil leaks from the engine.
3. The radio doesn't work.

I returned my car to Quality Motors three different times for repairs. It still doesn't run as it should.

I'm sure, Mr. Adams, that you don't want your company to be known as one that makes lemons. Or doesn't your warranty mean anything? If your company refuses to have my car properly repaired, I will take it back to Quality Motors. In that case, I will expect them to return the money I paid for it.

Respectfully,

Diana Barker
Diana Barker

P.S. I have sent a copy of this letter to the Nashville Better Business Bureau.

22 Based on this letter, what sort of person is Ms. Barker?

F shy

G unjust

H foolish

J determined

23 By saying " . . . doesn't your warranty mean anything?" what does Ms. Barker want Mr. Adams to do?

A give her another car

B return the car to Ms. Carlson

C offer free repairs according to the warranty

D return the car to her after 12 months

24 Which of the following would be a satisfactory solution for Ms. Barker?

F A new warranty would be issued.

G Quality Motors would replace the engine.

H Ms. Barker's car would be repaired.

J Ms. Barker's radio would be replaced.

25 A company "that makes lemons" means that it is one that

A grows lemons

B makes yellow cars

C paints lemons on cars

D makes cars that don't work properly

26 Who is the owner of Quality Motors in Nashville, Tennessee?

F Mr. Adams

G Mr. Condor

H Ms. Barker

J Ms. Carlson

27 Why is Ms. Barker complaining?

A The car is a four-door model.

B The car was purchased in Nashville, Tennessee.

C The car's problems have not been corrected.

D The car had been used and she thought it was new.

28 Why did Ms. Barker list the number of miles that she had driven her car?

F to get another car

G to get Ms. Carlson to change her oil

H to let Ms. Carlson know when she was in Nashville

J to let Mr. Adams know that the warranty was still good

29 Why is the car still under the warranty agreement?

A It has a number.

B It was bought in Tennessee.

C It has parts that must be repaired.

D It has been driven less than 18,000 miles and for less than a year.

30 Why did Ms. Barker write this letter?

F to see Mr. Adams

G to get a new car

H to get a new radio

J to have her car repaired

UNIT 15
TABE 1987, Level E, Form 5

The following is a letter. Use it to do Numbers 35 through 40.

September 22, 1986

Ms. Ellen Brown, President
Radar Metal Products
214 West Hill Road
Cedar City, Montana 59222

Dear Ms. Brown:

Many of us working here live in Cedar City and have young children. Cedar City has very few child-care centers. We would like to talk to you about having a child-care center here at work.

Three companies—Simco, Valley Electric, and Johnson Tools—set up child-care centers last year. A Simco supervisor said the workers have worked harder and have not missed work as much since the center opened. The workers say their children receive better care there. They like the time they save by not having to drive extra miles to a baby sitter.

We like our jobs here. A child-care center would really help us and benefit the company, too. I have attached a list of names of workers who are interested in this idea. We would appreciate meeting with you soon to discuss it.

Respectfully,

Sara Hall

Sara Hall
Leader, Division C

SH/hck

35 Sara Hall is probably appealing to Ms. Brown because Ms. Brown is

A a child-care expert

B a powerful union leader

C a leader in local government

D an important officer of Radar Metal Products

36 This letter is mostly about workers who want

F a raise

G a union

H better jobs

J a child-care center

37 How do the workers feel about their jobs at Radar Metal Products?

A angry

B pleased

C indifferent

D disappointed

38 Where does Sara Hall want to have a child-care center?

F at Johnson Tools

G at Valley Electric

H at Simco Manufacturing

J at Radar Metal Products

39 Sara Hall wrote a letter to Ms. Brown to ask her

A for a raise

B for a transfer

C for time off from work

D to meet with the workers

40 According to the letter, child-care centers in companies are

F free

G helpful

H exciting

J necessary

DREAMS

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

19 What kind of dreams does the poet refer to?

A hopeful dreams
B lazy daydreams
C forgotten dreams
D frightening dreams

20 What is the main idea of this poem?

F Dreaming is a useless waste of time.
G If you give up your dreams, life becomes empty.
H Hold on to your dreams by writing them down.
J If you have a dream, it will come true in time.

21 The lines "life is a barren field frozen with snow" are used to describe what happens when someone

A dreams of winter
B lets go of dreams
C becomes old and tired
D travels in the far north

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